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TACITUS

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BY

WILLIAM BODHAM DONNE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The writer desires to express his obligations to Dean Merivale for the permission granted by him to employ the 'History of the Romans under the Empire,' as a guide in many portions of this book. Also, he acknowledges his debt to Messrs. Church & Brodribb, for their kind consent—conveyed by their publishers, Messrs. Macmillan & Co.—to his availing himself of their admirable translations of the 'Agricola,' 'Germany,' and 'History' of Tacitus. For the 'Annals,' the Oxford translation, and, on one or two occasions, Mr. Murphy's, have been used. In the chapter entitled "The Orators," the citations are a paraphrase, not a translation.

That a far larger space is assigned to the 'History' than to the 'Annals' may require some explanation. The earlier written of these works is generally the far less commonly known of the two. The later, besides its length, demands far more scrutiny and sifting than the 'History,' and to be fairly represented, would have required more space than could be afforded—perhaps even a volume of the series for itself alone.

TACITUS.

CHAPTER I.

LIFE OF TACITUS.

THE birth-year of Tacitus can only be conjectured—indeed the little that is known of him personally is mostly derived from the letters of his friend, the younger Pliny, the date of whose birth helps us towards at least surmising that of the historian. Pliny was born in 61 or 62 A. D., since he was in his eighteenth year when the famous eruption of Vesuvius took place, A.D. 79. Now, in a letter from him to Tacitus, he writes: "When I was a very young man, and you were at the height of your fame and reputation, I earnestly desired to imitate you." The historian himself affords us a few glimpses at his public life. "My elevation," he says, "was begun by Vespasian." Again, we know on his own authority that he was prætor in 88 A.D., and on that of Pliny that he was consul in 97. Comparing these statements with each other, it is perhaps not rash to infer that Tacitus was by several years Pliny's senior. We are therefore inclined to fix 51 instead of 54 A.D.—the date usually assigned—as the year in which he was born.

His birthplace is unknown, nor can anything certain be told about his family. Some circumstances make it likely that the members of it were well to do in the world, if not highly distinguished, at least until he made the name of Tacitus memorable for all times. He rose rapidly in his public career; and that is hard for obscure and needy men to do. He married into a family of some rank; and in his writings he displays no token of the poverty that made his contemporaries, Martial and Juvenal, the one a flatterer of the great, the other a satirist of the wealthy and well-born. His abode, in early years at least, and possibly until he had passed middle life, was apparently either in Rome or its immediate neighborhood. For not only would his practice at the bar, and the public offices held by him, make it necessary to have a house in the capital, but there are some indications of his being in it even at the time of Galba's death. The 'History' bears several traces of his presence in Rome during that disastrous year in which four emperors contended for the purple, and, all but one, found the reward of their ambition in a violent or a voluntary death.

The public life of Tacitus dates from the later years of Vespasian's reign. His second patron was Titus Flavius, who, happily for himself, did not live long enough to forfeit his title of "Delight of Mankind." Not until we come to the fourteenth year of Domitian do we stand on firm ground as to his preferments. It is not easy to understand his relations to the third of the Flavian Cæsars. "I deny not," he says, "that my elevation was begun by Vespasian, continued by Titus, and still farther advanced by Domitian." So far, then, all the Flavian Cæsars and Tacitus were on good terms. Yet if the character he draws of Domi-

tian in the 'Agricola,' or where there is occasion to mention him in the 'History,' be a portrait and not a caricature, it is hard to conceive how he managed to serve such a master without flattering him as Martial, Statius, and other poets of the age did; or, if he did not flatter him, how he contrived to keep his head on his shoulders. There is no doubt that in the year 88 he was Prætor, and asssisted as one of the fifteen officials (*quindecemviri*) at the celebration of the secular games in that year.

Eleven years earlier, in 77, Tacitus was betrothed to the daughter of Julius Agricola, and in the next year they were married, just before his father-in-law left Rome to govern Britain. It is pleasant to infer from his writings that his marriage was a happy one; or that at least he had no cause for repenting of it. Speaking of his betrothed he says of her that she was "even then a maiden of noble promise." Both Agricola and his son-in-law were, to all appearance, fortunate in their partners for life. Not many of his friends and acquaintance were perhaps so lucky, since it was an age when to divorce a wife or a husband was nearly as common as to take one, if there be any truth in the verse of Martial or Juvenal, or in the anecdotes of Suetonius. A son who died in his infancy was the only fruit of Tacitus's marriage. The emperor of that name is reported to have claimed to be a descendant of the historian; and Sidonius Apollinaris, a writer in the fifth century of our era, addresses a letter to Polemius in which he reminds him of his illustrious ancestor, Tacitus. On grounds equally slender a father has been found for the historian, one Cornelius Tacitus, a Roman knight and procurator in Belgic Gaul, mentioned by the elder Pliny. Yet it

is strange that the younger Pliny never alludes to the procurator, who from his position can hardly have been a person quite obscure. In fact, Tacitus was not an unprecedented name, and Cornelius was a very common one in Italy.

On the expiration of his prætorship he would seem to have left Rome, and not to have returned to it until after Agricola's death, A.D. 93—an absence of at least four years. If he followed the ordinary course, he would be appointed on the expiration of his office to some provincial government. But whither he went, or how he employed himself during his absence from the capital, is not on record.

Credible testimony there is, conveyed by himself, that he was at Rome during the later and the worse period of Domitian's reign. "Our hands" (those of the senators), he writes in his 'Life of Agricola,' "dragged Helvidius to prison; we witnessed the fate of Mauricus and Rusticus; we were steeped in Senecio's innocent blood." Now and then the description of signal and stirring events is so vivid in Tacitus's pages that it is difficult not to believe them to have been traced by the hand of an eyewitness. The passage of the 'Agricola' just cited bears the marks of his presence in the senate when Domitian's victims were dragged away to die.

And yet, in spite of the doubt and darkness that hang over his personal history, Tacitus was a "celebrity" in Italy at least, and in the literary circles of Rome. That he was so is plain from the often repeated story of the recognition of his name by a stranger to his person. The stranger and himself happened to sit beside each other among the spectators of the games of the Circus, and for some time relieved the tediousness of familiar

and brutal exhibitions by discussing literary subjects. The stranger, a Roman knight, at length asked his neighbor on the bench whether he were a Roman or a provincial? Tacitus replied, "You are acquainted with me and by my pursuits." "Are you, then," was the rejoinder, "Tacitus or Pliny?" But such notoriety was probably due to his reputation as an orator, not as an historian. His 'Agricola' and 'Germany' alone were not likely to have carried his name so widely abroad as this anecdote implies, and the 'Annals' and 'History' were never ranked among the popular literature of either the capital or the provinces.

With Domitian expired, and for a long series of years, the worst effects of Cæsarianism; and the Roman world, for the first time since the death of Augustus, enjoyed the advantages of a strong and just though still irresponsible government. The senate was once again treated with respect, was relieved from anxiety about the lives or property of its members, was intrusted with a large share in the administration of public affairs, and found in the emperor a president and not a master or an assassin. "Now, at last," writes Tacitus, exulting in his relief from personal fears for his friends or himself; "our spring is returning. We enjoy the rare happiness of times when we may think what we please, and express what we think." The cloud of apprehension, indeed, is not quite lifted. Nerva was an old invalid, Trajan was a warrior, and the chances of war might deprive Rome of his services. "And yet," continues the biographer of the brave and moderate Agricola, "though at the dawn of a most happy age, Nerva Cæsar blended things once irreconcilable—sovereignty and freedom—though Nerva Trajan is now daily augmenting the prosperity of the time;

and though the public safety has not only our hopes and good wishes, but has also the certain pledge of their fulfilment, still, from the necessary condition of human frailty, the remedy works less quickly than the disease." The profound melancholy of these words will be obvious to every reader. He had lived to witness a senate honored; the prætorians and the legions kept under restraint; the informers (*delatores*) banished or silenced; the people, if not content, controlled by an effective police; the provinces equitably ruled; the Cæsar, in semblance at least, only the first citizen; thoughts no longer manacled; books no longer burnt in the forum, or used as evidence of treason against their authors. Yet he could not hide from himself the precarious tenure of these blessings. The happy age that had dawned rested on a foundation of sand. Among the senators might lie hid, in case of another revolution—and Tacitus had witnessed the untimely ends of four Cæsars—another voluptuous Nero, another timid and sanguinary Domitian. The freedom which depends on the character of the reigning sovereign is ever uncertain. Even Caligula and Nero for a while ruled well. The conduct of Trajan made vain the apprehensions of Tacitus. But the experience of his earlier days affected all his later ones, and he never quite reconciled himself to a Cæsar in the place of elective consuls, or to a privy council in that of a senate.

In the second year of Trajan's principate, Tacitus was one of the consuls. The office indeed was only the shadow of a once mighty name, and the duties of it were merely nominal. Yet it was still an honorable distinction and a permanent advance in social rank. The only recorded act of Tacitus in his consulship was

his delivery of the funeral oration over the body of Virginius Rufus, one of "the noblest Romans of them all" in that degenerate age. "Ever benign to this octogenarian hero,"—who, besides the usual perils of his calling, had thrice escaped from the fury of mutinous legionaries,—"Fortune," says Pliny, "reserved her last favor to him, that of being commemorated by the greatest of living orators."

In 99 A.D., Tacitus, now proconsul, was joined with Pliny, then consul-elect, in managing the impeachment of Marius Priscus for high crimes and misdemeanors committed by him while governor of the province of Africa. In spite of powerful advocacy and interest, the culprit was condemned. The prosecutors—the injured Africans—gained their suit, but apparently little else; for Marius, after paying heavy law expenses, and doubtless also as heavy bribes to some of the jury, lived very comfortably in exile upon the residue of his ill-got gains. He was infamous enough to be specially mentioned by the contemporary satirist:—

> ——"By a juggling sentence doomed in vain
> (For who, that holds the plunder, heeds the pain?)
> Marius to wine devotes his morning hours,
> And laughs in exile at the offended powers;
> While, sighing o'er the victory she has won,
> The province finds herself the more undone."
>
> —Juvenal, Sat. I. [Gifford.]

Pliny, in his description of the trial, says that Tacitus answered Salvius Liberalis, the counsel for the defendant, "most eloquently, and with that dignity which belongs in a remarkable degree to his oratory." The two illustrious pleaders received a vote of thanks from the senate for their exertions in the cause. From this moment Tacitus departs from sight. There is indeed a

slight trace of him in one of Pliny's letters, from which it appears that he was not at the time resident in Rome, nor very well supplied with news from it. And as we are unable to do more than surmise the date of his birth, so we must leave to conjecture that of his death. He lived long enough to complete, with one exception, the works he projected. He is the chronicler of the Cæsars from the death of Augustus to the accession of Nerva. "I have reserved," he tells us, "as an employment for my old age, should my life be long enough, a subject at once more fruitful and less anxious in the reign of the divine Nerva and the empire of Trajan." He may have rested from his labors before he began this work; or he may never have seriously meant to write it. Even of good Cæsars it might not always be prudent to speak the truth, and Tacitus may have thought himself living too near the time of his proposed narrative to write with impartiality about even a Trajan.

In the failure of materials for his life, we may endeavor to learn something of Tacitus from himself. If it be true that every great portrait-painter introduces upon his canvas something of his own nature, it is also true that every great historical writer infuses into his narrative something of his own feelings. It cannot escape any attentive reader of the 'Annals' in which the writer's proclivities are far more patent than in the 'History,' that he was an aristocrat, in the sense that the proud Appian, Fabian, and Claudian houses were of old. Although firmly convinced that the vast body of the empire could be effectively governed by one hand alone, he accepted a Cæsar as a necessity of the time. But to be resigned to a system of rule is one thing; to regard it with an eye of favor is another. Many who loved Cromwell little, served him well. It was no

small recommendation of Trajan to Tacitus that, departing from the solemn injunction of Augustus not to extend the borders of the empire, he added to it provinces north of the Theiss and east of the Euphrates. At last there was a Cæsar treading in the steps of the Scipios and Paulus Æmilius. And yet, notwithstanding his military virtues and the temperate character of his civil administration, it was not Trajan, but the consuls and senate of the past who had the historian's real allegiance. His contempt for the nobles among whom he sat in the great council-chamber at Rome only increased his admiration for the Conscript Fathers whom the Epirot envoy likened to a conclave of gods; and who bated not a "jot of hope or heart" when Pyrrhus was within a few miles of Rome or Hannibal at her gates. The mongrel populace of the capital, with its greed for bread and the games, he contrasted with the people that once supplied the pith of the legions, and who, although often turbulent and factious, were proud of their nobles and jealous of the honor of the Commonwealth. The Gracchi he viewed with dislike, since it was owing to their measures that the way was prepared for Caius Marius and the first Cæsar. The brother tribunes were the beginners of that evil end which Tacitus so deplored. By them and their mischievous laws the free Republic was turned into an absolute and irresponsible despotism, and the weal of millions intrusted to the discretion of one man. The reputation of Tacitus appears in his own time to have rested entirely on his powers as an orator. A few intimate friends indeed were forming high expectations of the history he had in hand; and Pliny, we know, supplied some materials for a work which he correctly judged would be immortal, but which he less correct-

ly anticipated would be immediately popular. It is strange that of an orator so renowned as he seems to have been not a line of his speeches remains, although there exist fragments of those of the Gracchi and Cato and Marius. Of the character of Tacitus's oratory we have only one hint. "Dignity" was its most remarkable feature; and "dignity" seems to have struck Sidonius Apollinaris as the leading characteristic of the historian, since, when giving a list of the most eminent Roman authors in prose or verse, he mentions the stately march (*pompa*) of the style of Tacitus—"a name," he adds, "never to be uttered without a tribute of applause." The speeches assigned by the historian to some of the persons in his narratives may have been cast in the mould of his own eloquence; and if so, then we may easily understand why "dignity" is ascribed to his public pleadings.

If we infer the disposition of Tacitus from the report of his oratory, or the study of his works, we shall regard him as a grave and sarcastic personage; and yet the inference might be wrong. The admiration, the affection of Pliny for his friend, the deep feeling with which Tacitus narrates the life and death of Agricola, the evident pleasure exhibited by him when delineating characters eminent for virtue, forbid us to imagine him austere or morose. But there are people, amiable and calm in disposition, who, when they take a pen into their hand, display a stern and acrid temper, more especially if they have a grievance or a theory to expound. Lack of preferment cannot have been among the causes for the gravity or despondency of Tacitus, for he had held the highest office of the State next to "great Cæsar's," and bore ever after the rank and title of a Consular.

There are men who live in the past—not merely students whose world is their library, but such as have taken a share in the business of the present time, and, nevertheless, yearn for days that cannot return. Was Tacitus of this class of men? More than once in his 'Annals' he appears to have been so. The chronicler of Tiberius, he says, has fallen on an evil time. "I am aware"—glancing, perhaps, at the more fortunate Livy, who could be a *Pompeian* without giving offence to Augustus—"that most of the transactions which I have related, or shall hereafter relate, may perhaps appear unimportant, and too trivial to be recorded. But none must compare these my Annals with the writings of those who compiled the history of the ancient Roman people. *They* had for their subjects mighty wars, cities sacked, kings routed and taken captive; or if they turned from these to treat of domestic affairs, they had before them an unlimited field for digression in the dissensions between the consuls and the tribunes, the agrarian laws, the corn-laws, and the contests between the commons and the patricians. The matter on which I am occupied is circumscribed and unproductive of renown to the author—a state of undisturbed peace, or only interrupted in a limited degree, the sad condition of affairs in the city, and a prince indifferent about extending the bounds of the empire."* He sighed for the brave days when some province almost yearly was annexed to the commonwealth. The manly virtues of a past age blinded him to its faults, and in his aversion to a single rule he forgot the vices of a divided one.

The names of some of his friends have been preserved—that of Justus Fabius, to whom he addressed

*Annals, iv. 32.

the 'Dialogue on the Orators,' and that of Asinius Rufus, both friends also of Pliny. From Pliny we derive the best part of our slight knowledge of the historian, to whom he addresses eleven of his letters. Between him and Tacitus the strictest intimacy existed. Each of them submitted his writings to the other's inspection, and Pliny is never weary of applauding the harmony, frankness, and good faith which pervaded their intercourse from first to last. Pliny ever prophesied great things of the historical works on which Tacitus was engaged, and furnished him with materials, as, for example, two letters on the eruption of Vesuvius. Of the two we know not which was the survivor, but we are able to say that no cloud ever dimmed the brightness of their friendship. So well known, indeed, was their affection for each other, that they were jointly remembered in people's wills, and for equal legacies, unless the testator chanced to be especially a friend to either. Pliny, indeed, intimates (Epist. vii. 20) that "there lacked not those who were preferred to one or both of them," but, as for himself, he uniformly assigned the precedence in all things to his beloved friend.

CHAPTER II.

'AGRICOLA.'

THIS book is intended to perpetuate the memory of its author's father-in-law, of whom it is justly said that "one would easily believe him a good man, and willingly believe him a great one." "To bequeath," writes Tacitus, at the opening of it, "to posterity a record of

the deeds and characters of distinguished men is an ancient practice, which even the present age, careless as it is of its own sons, has not abandoned whenever some great and conspicuous excellence has conquered and risen superior to that failing common alike to petty and great states, blindness and hostility to goodness. But in days gone by, as there was a greater inclination and a more open path to the achievement of memorable actions, so the man of highest genius was led by the simple reward of a good conscience to hand on without partiality or self-seeking the remembrance of greatness." In very early times, when perhaps writing was not a common accomplishment,—for consuls who handled well the spade can hardly have been very adroit with the pen—biographies took mostly the form of funeral orations, and of their partiality or inaccuracy Livy complains. So far from supplying the historian with trustworthy materials, they misled and perplexed him in his researches. Whether, as manners became more corrupt, biographers grew more veracious, cannot be told.

Cnæus Julius Agricola was born at the ancient and famous colony of *Forum Julii*—the modern 'Frejus.' Each of his grandfathers was an imperial procurator—that is, of the highest equestrian rank. His father, Julius Græcinus, was of even higher station, since he was a member of the senatorian order. Græcinus was a distinguished orator and philosopher, but these good gifts excited the envy of Caius Cæsar who took the first convenient opportunity of getting rid of him. His mother, Julia Procilla, was a matron of the old Roman stamp. Under her wise and watchful guardianship, Agricola imbibed in early youth the virtues which he practised in mature years. In a period notorious for extravagance and excess of every descrip-

tion—vices that extended even to learning and philosophy—Julia kept always in view the wholesome doctrine of a "golden mean." While pursuing his studies at Massilia (Marseilles),—one of the great universities of the empire—he manifested a keen relish for merely speculative subjects—more, indeed, than his mother approved. She destined the apt pupil for practical life. She looked forward to his serving his country in the senate and the field. She knew, perhaps too well, that the philosophers of the time were often idle dreamers, and sometimes arrant knaves. From each of the four great schools he might derive some wholesome rules for the conduct of life, but no one of them would fit him for commanding a legion, or for becoming a great advocate, or a great lawyer. This philosophical tendency—the only excess ascribed to Agricola—"was soon corrected by reason and experience, and he retained from his learning that most difficult of lessons—moderation."

An untimely end was in store for this exemplary matron. After Nero's death, the empire was torn in pieces by civil wars. The fleet of Otho, one of the three competitors for the purple, "while cruising idly about, cruelly ravaged Vintimiglia (*Intemelii*), a district of Liguria, and Julia, who was living there on her own estate, was murdered, and the estate itself, and a large portion of her patrimony were plundered."

Britain was to Rome in those days very nearly what Algeria is now to France,—a school of war, and a nursery of recruits. It was there that Agricola served his military apprenticeship. His first commander was Suetonius Paulinus, a diligent and judicious officer, who, probably discerning in the young man great capability for his profession, made choice of him to

share his tent. This mode of initiation for an officer bears some resemblance to the practice of the feudal times, when the sons of good families were trained for warlike or civil duties at the court of the king or in the castle of some powerful baron. "Agricola," we are told by his biographer, "without the recklessness with which young men often make the profession of arms a mere pastime, and without indolence, never availed himself of his tribune's rank, or his own inexperience, to procure enjoyment or to escape from duty. He sought to make himself acquainted with the province and known to the army; he would learn from the skilful, and keep pace with the bravest; would attempt nothing for display, would avoid nothing from fear, and would be at once careful and vigilant."

When Agricola was in the tent or on the staff of Paulinus, there was much to do and much to learn in Britain. The victories that had been won in the island by the generals of Claudius had been rendered nearly ineffectual by the subsequent rebellion of the British people. "Never," says Tacitus, "was the island in a more disturbed or critical condition." "Veteran soldiers had been massacred, colonial towns burnt, vast districts of the open country ravaged, and armies cut off." It was a sound though a sevcre school for a young officer, and he learnt in it "skill, experience, and a desire to rise in his profession (*ambitio*)."

Nearly every Roman was expected to combine a civil with a military career. From Britain Agricola went to Rome, to go through the ordinary routine of office. He was appointed quæstor, and the ballot assigned to him Asia for his province and Salvius Titianus for his proconsul. The young officials of Rome seldom returned from an Eastern province the

better, except in pocket, for their sojourn in it. The morals of Roman Asia were even worse than the morals of the capital. The province itself was wealthy, and the inhabitants of it were regarded as fair prey for old or young gentlemen whose creditors were troublesome. Agricola, however, according to his biographer, did nothing to be ashamed of in his quæstorship.

He married, at Rome, Domitia Decidiana, a lady of illustrious birth. Their union was a very happy one. They had two children—a son, who died in his infancy, and a daughter, who was married to Tacitus.

His prætorship, also, was nearly a sinecure. He exhibited, as his office bound him to do, some Games; and in all matters of ceremony he kept up the dignity of a first-class public magistrate, erring neither on the side of profusion nor on that of parsimony. By such comparative insignificance he may have escaped unpleasant collision with the Cæsar or his favorites. For in Nero's reign, more especially in the later years of it, to keep out of that tyrant's sight as much as possible was the wisest course that high officials, civil or military, could follow. Nero's immediate successor, Servius Galba, must have had a good opinion of Agricola's probity, since he appointed him one of the commissioners for inspecting the accounts of the offerings and deposits at various temples in Rome or the provinces. All that Nero had appropriated had been dissipated beyond recovery; and it was one of the deepest offences given by the unfortunate Galba that he tried to compel the ministers and freedmen of Nero to refund his bounties. In other respects the commissioners reported favorably on the condition of ecclesiastical property, and so were able to exonerate

the conscience of the State from the burden of sacrilege. Tacitus commends the "searching scrutiny" of Agricola; yet since, in so delicate an investigation, it might not have been difficult to "cook the accounts." his colleagues must surely have been as honest as himself.

He was hurrying from Rome to pay the last honors to his mother, when a messenger overtook him with the tidings that Vespasian was a candidate for the throne. He at once joined the Flavian party. The deeds of Vespasian in Britain alone were well known to one who had served in that island himself, and the new Cæsar's renown had recently been increased by his conduct in the Jewish wars. The emperor had not yet quitted the east, or at least had come no nearer Rome than Alexandria. He at once despatched Agricola to recruit the legions in Britain. The twentieth legion had reluctantly taken the oath of allegiance to Vespasian; and the tribune whom Agricola succeeded in the command, had fostered in the soldiers a spirit of insubordination. Accordingly, it can have been no easy task, and it may have been a perilous one, to restore discipline. During that chaotic period of civil wars the legionaries had frequently risen against their generals; had sometimes murdered, had often expelled them, not unwounded, from the camp; and had freely shed the blood of the centurions and other officers. Once more Agricola's discretion and even temper prevailed, and the Twentieth appears to have been reconciled to the new dynasty.

Vespasian knew how to appreciate a good officer, and Agricola's promotion rapidly followed. Returning from Britain in 73 A.D., he was appointed to the important province of Aquitania and raised to the rank

of a patrician. His provincial government lasted three years; and in 77 he was recalled to Rome, where he was invested with the consular robes and adopted into the college of augurs—an honorable and not quite an empty distinction, since it empowered the commander of an army to take the auspices whenever it might be advisable to soothe the fears, to repress the zeal, or stimulate the valor, of the legionaries. Britain, the scene of his past services and of his future fame, was assigned to him as his province.

The new proconsul found, on his arrival in his province about the midsummer of 78, much work to be done, and also much to be undone, The soldiers were demoralized, the Britons were biding their time, and the Roman officers generally were flattering themselves that the subjugation of the islanders was complete. So far was it from being so, that some tribes were actually under arms, and others preparing to try once again the fortune of war. A serious loss had been sustained by the Romans shortly before Agricola's arrival. The Ordovices, seated between Cardigan Bay and the river Dee, had cut to pieces a squadron of cavalry quartered in their territory, and it was difficult at the instant to get a fresh supply of horses; for the small breed, or rather the ponies, of Britain, were not suited for cavalry. The hopes of the Britons had revived by their success. They anxiously watched the temper of their new governor. Would he be a corrupt and slothful, or an able and strenuous administrator?—for they had experienced both kinds. Should they hasten or defer their long-intended revolt, then simmering over nearly all the island from the Humber to the straits of Dover?

The summer of 78 was verging on autumn before

Agricola was ready to open the campaign. Nor at first did he meet with very zealous support. The soldiers of many divisions had promised themselves the pleasure of inaction and free quarters for that year at least, while many of the officers urged him to be content for the present with watching the movements of the British chieftains. But Agricola resolved to face the open or secret peril immediately. His first act was nearly to exterminate the Ordovices. Yet prompt and sharp as this retaliation was, it was a two-edged weapon. It might intimidate or it might more deeply incense the Britons. The victory must be followed up. The next blow was stricken in the same quarter, and the little island of Mona (Anglesey), which Suetonius Paulinus had taken, but had been compelled by a rising of the eastern tribes to abandon, was again annexed to Roman Britain. This time, the natives made but a feeble defense of the sacred island, although the assailants labored under the grave disadvantage of being without a fleet. "The skill and resolution of the general accomplished the passage. With some picked men of the auxiliaries, disencumbered of all baggage, who knew the shallows and had that national experience in swimming which enables the Britons to take care not only of themselves, but of their arms and horses, he delivered so unexpected an attack, that the astonished enemy, who were looking for a fleet, and an assault by sea, could not imagine anything would be formidable or invincible to such assailants."

Let the reader observe that Agricola's success was mainly owing to the skill of *British* auxiliaries in "swimming." It is an undesigned evidence that the tribes of Britain were employed by Roman generals

against their own countrymen, just as native regiments in our Indian wars are employed as auxiliaries. The recovery of Mona immediately increased the fame and stamped the character of Agricola as an energetic soldier. Other proconsuls, if we may accept the statement of a panegyrist, had idled their time away "in vain display" and a round of ceremonies, whereas he "chose rather toil and danger," and kept in the field at a period—the autumnal equinox—when it was the usual practice of commanders to withdraw into winter quarters.

In the next summer, 79 A.D., Agricola advanced northward into the territory of the Brigantes, and undertook the organization of the district, lately reduced, between the Humber and the Tyne. To protect these new subjects of the empire from the incursions of the barbarians who roamed the Cheviots and the Pentland hills, he drew a chain of forts from sea to sea. In 80 he moved further northward, still consolidating his acquired land; and in 81 he pushed along the eastern coast as far as the Firth of Forth, building forts and making roads at every step of his progress. All the country south of the Forth was now occupied by Roman garrisons, and "the enemy were pushed into what might be called another island." For a moment the empire seemed to have found its northern limit. The fifth year of his proconsulship was engaged in strengthening his position between the two isthmuses, and in reducing the western side of the new domain. From the Mull of Galloway he discovered an island hitherto unknown to Roman navigators. "The grassy plains of teeming Hibernia," says Dean Merivale, "offered a fairer prey than the grey mountains which frowned upon his fresh intrenchments, and all their

wealth, he was assured, might be secured by the valor of a single legion. But other counsels prevailed, and Ireland, so the fates ordained, was left to her fogs and feuds for eleven more centuries."

But while Agricola was engaged in consolidating his northern province, and securing it by walls and forts against inroads, the Caledonians, mistaking his two years' inaction for exhaustion or fear, resumed their courage. He returned, therefore, to offensive measures. Understanding them to be preparing to make a combined attack on his lines, he anticipated them by a rapid incursion into the regions beyond the Forth. The land was for the most part a barren waste; the enemy was numerous and able to cut off even the scantiest supply of food, and the army must therefore be furnished with a commissariat. This could be supplied by a naval armament alone. Such an armament accordingly was fitted out, and moved parallel to his flank as he marched along the coast of Fife. Prisoners reported that the Britons were astounded at the sight of the fleet, and saw that if their bays, creeks, and the mouths of their rivers were open to invasion no refuge would remain for themselves. Surprised they may have been by this novel aspect of war, but they were not disheartened, nor was their strategy that of ignorant barbarians. They would not meet the advancing legions, but got between them and the forts in their rear, so that in case of a defeat the retreat of the Romans would be cut off. On learning that the Caledonian attack would be made with more than one army, and taking into account their superior numbers and knowledge of the ground, Agricola distributed his forces in three divisions, and so advanced to the encounter. With the exception of a heavy loss sustained by the ninth legion

from a sudden assault in the night, the defeat of the Britons was a signal one, and "had not the flying enemy been sheltered by morasses and forests, this victory would have ended the war."

We are now on the verge of the most animated and interesting portion of this biography. Hitherto, so far as Agricola is concerned, we have read the names of tribes or clans only, and not till his seventh campaign, in 84 A.D. do we meet with an individual man worthy to stand beside Caractacus and Boadicea; at least we must suppose Tacitus to have believed in the personality of Galgacus, since he puts a speech, and to us a very instructive one, in his mouth. It is valuable on two accounts: on the one hand it gives a notion of Tacitus's own eloquence, pregnant with thought, condensed in phrase, sagacious in its views, epigrammatic in its periods; on the other, we may discern in the words ascribed to Galgacus some prevision of an approaching revolution in the fortunes of the historian's own countrymen. After referring to the sufferings already endured at Roman hands by every tribe of Britons, to the cruelty, rapacity, and lust of their oppressors, Galgacus proceeds to hint that there is a worm in the bud of the unwieldly empire.

"Do you suppose," he is made to say, "that the Romans will be as brave in war as they are licentious in peace? To our strifes and discords they owe their fame, and they turn the errors of an enemy to the renown of their own army—an army which, composed as it is of every variety of nations, is held together by success, and will be broken up by disaster. These Gauls and Germans, and, I blush to say, these numerous Britons, who, though they lend their lives to support a stranger's rule, have been its enemies longer than its

subjects, you cannot imagine to be bound by fidelity and affection. Fear and terror there certainly are, feeble bonds of attachment: remove them, and those who have ceased to fear will begin to hate."

With the battle of the Grampians,* and the rout of Galgacus and the Caledonian Army, Agricola's military career virtually closed, although he remained in his province a few months after this signal victory. If we may give implicit credence to one so nearly connected with him, Agricola may rank with Cicero, as an exception to the ordinary class of Roman provincial governors. Never relaxing in vigilance, and only once taken unawares by the enemy, he restored discipline in the camp, and explored the estuaries and forests on his route. "Many states, hitherto independent, gave hostages, and laid aside their animosities. Garrisons and forts were established among them with a skill and diligence with which no newly-acquired part of Britain had before been treated."

The civilizing power of Rome furnishes the brightest chapter in her annals. It was by her institutions, far more than by her arms, that the nations of the empire melted away into the Roman name and people. "Wheresoever the Roman conquers he inhabits," is a very just observation of Seneca; and he might have added that wherever he inhabited, at least in the northern and western provinces, he disseminated the arts of peace and the boon of a refined and uniform language. It could not escape a sagacious and humane proconsul that territory acquired by war would be best maintained by introducing a taste and a demand

* The "Mons Grampius" is said now to be an error of transcription, the real name given by Tacitus being Mons Graupius."

for the luxuries of the conqueror, and not the luxuries only, but greater skill in agriculture and new systems for conducting public business. "In order," says Tacitus, "to accustom to rest and repose through the charms of luxury a population scattered and barbarous and therefore inclined to war, Agricola gave private encouragement and public aid to the building of temples, courts of justice, and dwelling-houses, praising the energetic and reproving the indolent. Thus an honorable rivalry took the place of compulsion. He likewise provided a liberal education for the sons of the chiefs, and showed such a preference for the natural powers of the Britons over the industry of the Gauls, that they who lately disdained the tongue of Rome now coveted its eloquence. Hence, too, a liking sprang up for our style of dress, and the 'toga' became fashionable. Step by step they were led to things which dispose to vice—the lounge, the bath, the elegant banquet. All this, in their ignorance, they called civilization, when it was in fact but a part of their servitude."

He consulted alike for the good conduct of his army and the convenience of the Britons. He kept his household under restraint, a thing as hard to many as ruling a province. Neither freedmen nor slaves were allowed to assist in transacting public business—a virtue which his Roman readers could more thoroughly appreciate than his modern ones. Promotion he determined by merit alone; impartial himself, he listened not to the prayers or recommendation of his friends. As regarded the nations—"he lightened the exaction of corn and tribute by an equal distribution of the burden, while he got rid of those contrivances for gain which were more intolerable than the tribute itself."

Agricola was recalled in A.D. 84, having been in his province nearly eight years. Tacitus insinuates that Domitian feared lest his victorious and popular lieutenant might prefer security in Britain to very possible danger at Rome. But whether the emperor were jealous of him or not, Agricola, a man of the old Roman stamp, "knew how to obey as well as to command." To soothe his mortification, if he felt any, at being ordered to resign, a freedman was sent to him with the tempting offer of the government of Syria. The messenger was charged not to deliver the letter if he found the proconsul ready to obey. Agricola never saw the imperial rescript; it was brought back unopened to the Cæsar—the ex-proconsul was already crossing the Channel on his way Rome-ward.

With his recall from Britain ended the public life of Agricola. He prudently avoided all display; he entered Rome after nightfall, so as to shun a reception by his friends or the populace: at night also he went to the palace, and after a hurried embrace from Domitian, who deigned not a word to his ex-viceroy, he mingled in the crowd of courtiers. Henceforward he studiously shunned publicity. Simple in dress, courteous in conversation, accompanied by two or three friends, he excited the surprise of a people accustomed and not unfavorable to ostentation. "Can this," they said, "be the hero of a hundred fights? Can this be the man who has really conquered those warlike islanders, whom the mighty Julius left to their original freedom, and whom Claudius and his captains imperfectly subdued?" "The many," says Tacitus, "who commonly judge of great men by their external grandeur, after having seen and attentively surveyed

him, asked the secret of a greatness which but few could explain,"

And yet not even his modesty and retirement exempted Agricola from danger. While in Britain, he had often been a mark for informers, though he was uniformly acquitted. So far at least Domitian deserves credit for turning a deaf ear alike to those who accused, or to those who insidiously extolled the absent proconsul; "for," Tacitus justly remarks, "the worst class of enemies" under a despotism "are the men who praise."

One more offer of preferment was made to Agricola. The year, the fifty-second of his age (90 A.D.), had arrived in which the proconsulate of Asia or Africa was to fall to him by lot. Perhaps his friends, certainly the voice of the people, called on him to accept this office, for both of them contrasted his vigor, firmness and experience in war, with the inertness and timidity of other generals. His enemies, however, on this occasion were his better counsellors. Knowing Domitian's reluctance to employ him in any high office, they artfully contrived to lead Agricola himself to refuse it. They tendered their services in procuring acceptance for his excuse; and at last throwing off all disguise, brought him by entreaties and threats to Domitian. The excuse was offered, was accepted, and the Cæsar thanked for his gracious condescension. However, notwithstanding his supposed envy and hatred of the man, Domitian "was softened by the moderation and prudence of Agricola"—and Tacitus closes this section of the Biography with one of the many pregnant observations that, well understood, throw such light on Cæsarian history, as well as afford a clue to his own opinions. "Let it be known."

he says, "to those whose habit it is to admire the disregard of authority" (the political Stoics of the time), "that there may be great men even under bad emperors, and that obedience and submission, when joined to activity and vigor, may attain a glory which most men reach only by a perilous career, utterly useless to the State, and closed by death intended for effect." The gist of this sentiment often appears in both the 'History' and 'Annals.' "Good people," thought Tacitus, "are scarce enough in such evil times; why, by self-destruction, will they make the number even fewer?"

Agricola died in the fifty-sixth year of his age. There was a rumor of his having been poisoned. His son-in-law declines giving an opinion on the subject. Tacitus himself was far away from Rome at the moment. Yet there was a report of foul play—and a report was a temptation which the historian rarely resists. It looked very suspicious that "during the whole of Agricola's illness the emperor's chief freedmen and confidential physicians called more frequently than is usual with a court which pays its visits by means of messengers." Such departure from imperial routine had an ugly favor—and, to do the Roman people justice, it must be allowed that they were as credulous in believing rumors as the Parisian people are now, and have ever been. It is superfluous to canvass the truth or falsehood of a story for which the biographer himself will not vouch. The dying Agricola did not fail to remember Domitian in his last will and testament. He made him co-heir with his excellent wife and most dutiful daughter, and the emperor expressed his delight at so handsome a bequest. Perhaps the widow Domitia Decidiana and her daughter fared not the worse for this parting com-

pliment; and even Tacitus himself may have been indebted to it for protection from informers, and thus survived to paint the last Flavian Cæsar as a second—and even a worse—Nero. He winds up his account of Agricola's last moments with these words: "So blinded and perverted was Domitian's mind by incessant flattery, that he did not know it was only a bad emperor whom a good father would make his heir."

The concluding sections of the 'Life of Agricola' have in all times been regarded among the noblest samples of historical eloquence. After recounting Agricola's demeanor in his last hours, the tender care of his most loving and faithful Decidiana, and his own and his wife's grief at their absence from his dying bed, the biographer proceeds: "If there is any dwelling-place for the spirits of the just; if, as the wise believe, noble souls do not perish with the body, rest thou in peace; and call us, thy family, from weak regrets and womanish laments to the contemplation of thy virtues, for which we must not weep nor beat the breast. Let us honor thee not so much with transitory praises as with our reverence; and, if our powers permit us, with our emulation. That will be true respect, that the true affection of thy nearest kin. This, too, is what I would enjoin on the daughter and wife,—to honor the memory of such a father, such a husband, by pondering in their hearts all his words and acts, by cherishing the features and lineaments of his character rather than those of his person. It is not that I would forbid the likenesses which are wrought in marble or in bronze; but as the faces of men, so all similitudes of the face are weak and perishable things, while the fashion of the soul is everlasting, such as may be expressed, not in some foreign substance, or by the help of art, but in our own lives,

Whatever we loved, whatever we admired in Agricola, survives, and will survive in the hearts of men, in the succession of the ages, in the fame that waits on noble deeds. Over many, indeed, of those who have gone before, as over the inglorious and ignoble, the waves of oblivion will roll; Agricola, made known to posterity by history and tradition, will live for ever."

To English readers Agricola is naturally one of the most interesting persons in Roman annals; since he was the first to disclose to Cæsar and Europe the extent and value of the youngest of Roman provinces. He has commonly the credit of being the first circumnavigator of our island; but of late years this opinion has been considerably modified. The insular character of Britain had been asserted ever since the time of Cæsar; but Dion Cassius, an historian of the second century of our era, is the first to relate that Agricola's fleet, in the year 84 A.D., sailed completely round it. But it should be borne in mind that Dion flourished more than a century after the supposed circumnavigation took place, and at a time when the form and dimensions of Britain were well known, and its roads and principal harbors were laid down in the Itineraries. Unfortunately the text of Tacitus is corrupt just where we need it to be clear, and we cannot pronounce from his narrative whether he described Agricola's naval officers as having completed or merely forwarded the discovery. He tells us that after Agricola's seventh campaign closed with the summer of 84 A.D., he directed the fleet, which had hitherto accompanied the movements of his army, to proceed northward, and, besides striking terror in the still unconquered Caledonian tribes, to collect for him such information as he needed for his next movements in the summer of the ensuing year,

Now it is important to bear in mind that the fleet began its voyage northwards at the beginning of autumn, and also that Roman mariners rarely, except under strong pressure, put out far to sea, but usually hugged the coast from headland to headland. Moreover, an expedition beginning after the short summer in that high latitude was past, would encounter the equinoctial gales near at hand. We have no reason to suppose that Agricola's ships did not return in good condition to their winter-harbor in the Forth: accordingly their exploring errand can hardly have occupied more than a few weeks, a period much too brief to allow not very bold or skilful sailors to circumnavigate so large an island, to say nothing of October tides, the fogs of the Irish Channel, and the fact that there were no charts to guide them, and possibly also no experienced or trustworthy pilots to be found. The opinion of Dean Merivale on this subject is favorable to a certain amount of new discovery, but adverse to a complete one. "The Roman mariners," he says, "now for the first time entered the Pentland Firth, surveyed and counted the Orkney Islands, and gained perhaps a glimpse of the Shetlands. They ascertained the point at which Britain terminates northward, and possibly noted the great deflection of the coast southward from Cape Wrath. Having effected the object of the expedition,"—that of informing their commander-in-chief how far his next summer's advance might extend,—"they returned, as I cannot doubt, still creeping timidly, as was their wont, from headland to headland, and having hugged the eastern coast from Caithness to the Firth of Forth, were finally drawn up for the winter on the beach from which they had been launched at the commencement of the season." . . .

"The demonstration thus obtained was itself regarded as a triumphal achievement, and Agricola was celebrated by his countrymen as an explorer as well as a conqueror." *

The appellation of "conqueror" is justly due to Agricola for his achievements north of the Humber, where he reduced to at least a temporary submission the present districts of Yorkshire, Durham, and Northumberland, and for his success in the hitherto untrodden ground of Caledonia. Still greater praise than that accorded him for his victories in the field, belongs to him for the care he took to secure and consolidate his acquisitions. With the patience and precaution of a Wellington, he never made an advance without previously providing for the safety of his army in flank and rear, and he employed for that end the constant Roman method of laying down roads and building a chain of forts linked to one another by walls of earth capped and faced with stone or solid brick-work. "Struck perhaps with the natural defences of the line from the Tyne to the Solway, where the island seems to have been broken, as it were, in the middle, he drew a chain of forts from sea to sea to protect the reclaimed subjects of the southern valleys from the untamed barbarians who roamed the Cheviots and the Pentlands." †

The Roman generals who preceded Agricola are briefly enumerated by Tacitus. In south Britain the progress of the invader was slow, and checked by many serious reverses, but it was sure. Aulus Plautius was the first governor of consular rank, and he was most

* History of the Romans, vii. 89.

† Merivale, vii. 1.

effectively seconded by Flavius Vespasian, then "first shown to the fates." In our island he learned or practised the art of war, which he so brilliantly employed afterwards against an infuriate and despairing foe in Palestine, and which, combined with his civil merits, finally elevated him to the purple. Plautius defeated the Trinobantes, under their leaders, Caractacus and Togodumnus, the sons of Cunobelin, one of the most powerful of the British kings. His capital was Camulodunum—Colchester. Plautius, however, appears to have penetrated from the eastern counties to Gloucestershire; and his lieutenant, Vespasian, "crossing the banks of a broad river," [the Severn?] to have led his detachment over the Welch border. Our readers would probably owe us small thanks were we to trace the march of the legions over uncertain ground. The success of his proconsul was sufficient to induce the not very youthful and unwieldy Claudius to cross the channel and to take part in the war. From the movements of his general we might expect that the Cæsar would proceed at once from his landing-place in Kent to Gloucestershire. On the contrary, he went into Essex, and routed the Trinobantes, in the camp which they had drawn around Camulodunum, so bewildering is our information on the Roman campaigns in Britain.

On his return to Rome, Claudius celebrated a triumph which he had fairly earned, for his conquests were really solid and extensive; and had not his lieutenants relaxed in their vigilance, or had they been better acquainted with the character of the natives, a considerable portion of Britain south of the Humber would have quietly submitted to the yoke of the Romans. But the victors had still a lesson to learn. The easier portion of their task was to encounter the enemy

in the field: to follow him into the forests and morasses, to detect and suppress promptly his cabals, and break up his conefderacies, were labors yet to be undergone, and disaster far more than success was to be the instructor of a series of proconsuls.

In the year 47 A.D., Plautius was succeeded by Ostorius Scapula, who signalized his command by founding the colony of Camulodunum, and receiving, from a traitor's hand indeed, the surrender of Caractacus. The next distinguished proconsul was Suetonius Paulinus, whose name is inseparably connected with his defeat of the Britons in Anglesey (Mona), his suppression of the revolted Iceni, and the romantic story of Boadicea. "But for him," Tacitus says, "Britain would have been lost." The fury of the Iceni was especially directed against the colony at Camulodunum. It was a monument of their humiliation; so long as it stood, freedom was hopeless—the ground on which it was built had been wrenched from them—it was the abode of those whom they hated even more than the legionaries, the collectors of tribute; and in it towered the great temple of Claudius, a perpetual insult to the deities of the land. The city, betrayed by the Trinobantes, was assailed by the Iceni. The garrison was feeble: the fortifications were hastily run up at the last moment: the troops which might have defended it were in remote quarters; and on the second day of the siege the stronghold was stormed, and all who had sought refuge in it, armed or unarmed, were slaughtered.

This was the last signal calamity that befell the Romans in Britain, and it was speedily avenged. Suetonius, in spite of his great services, was recalled. He appears to have been better suited for the rough work of war than for the delicate office of soothing the

conquered, and reconciling them to their new masters. Under his successor, Petronius Turpilianus, victors and vanquished enjoyed without abusing them two years of peace, and Roman civilization began to exercise its influence on Britain.

Under the successors of Agricola, the southern Britons generally acquiesced in the dominion of Rome, and the northern were awed by her prowess, or won by her arts. Commerce tended to efface the ravages of war. The products of the island, consisting chiefly of raw materials, found a ready market in the cities of Gaul; the youth of Britain were drafted into the legions and dispersed over the wide circumference of the empire in the camps of Egypt, Africa, and Syria, while at the same time natives of other lineage, and speaking strange languages, were imported into an island which a century earlier had been described as a new and scarcely habitable world.

"A hope is expressed," says Gibbon, "by Pomponius Mela, a geographer who wrote under Claudius, that by the success of Roman arms the island (Britain) and its savage inhabitants would soon be better known. It is amusing enough to peruse such passages in the midst of London." Perhaps what has least changed in the island since Tacitus commemorated the deeds of his father-in-law is the weather. "Severity of cold," he remarks, "is unknown, but their sky is obscured by continual rain and cloud." The historian's opinion, however unpalatable to ourselves, is still an article of faith in many European lands; and indeed we need not go further than Paris to be told that the sky which obscured the camp of Agricola still hangs over our shires and cities.

CHAPTER III.

THE 'GERMANY.'

A PASSAGE in this treatise on the manners and social condition of the Germans, affords a clue to the date of its composition. "Rome," says Tacitus, "was in her 640th year, when we first heard of the Cimbrian invader in the consulship of Cæcilius Metellus and Papirius Carbo, from which time to the second consulship of the Emperor Trajan, we find to be an interval of about 210 years." Consequently it was under its author's hand at least in the year 98 A.D.

And here our positive information about the 'Germany' ends. It has been pronounced to be a geographical and ethnological essay; a chapter, or a draft of one, intended for insertion in some historical narrative, or a satire on Roman morals as well as a record of German manners. If the 'History' had come down to us unmutilated, the problem might very likely have been solved. Tacitus delighted in episodes on the character of foreign nations. We have a fragment of one in his account of the Jews; had he composed his projected life of Trajan there would possibly have been a special account of the Parthians; and we may owe this treatise on the Germans to the interest awakened in him when a young man by the revolt of some Teutonic races in the wars that followed Nero's death in 68 A.D.

For supposing a satirical element in the 'Germany' there is plausible ground. His praise of the German wife is a scarcely concealed reproach of the Roman matron of his time. The Germans, he tells us, made no wills; the legacy-hunters of Rome were as notorious as the informers. The Roman nobles were often deeply

in debt, and money-lenders were many and troublesome; whereas the virtuous Germans, at least of the interior—for those on the eastern Rhine-bank were beginning to be civilized and corrupted—cared little for gold or silver; and, indeed, were such outer-barbarians that their chieftains held the silver cups and salvers which prætors or proconsuls had given them as cheap as those of clay! Again, they were not at all, in respect of funerals, "noble animals, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave."* They did not heap garments or spices on the funeral pyre; they simply observed the custom of burning the bodies of illustrious men with certain kinds of wood. A turf mound formed their tombs; monuments, with their lofty and elaborate splendor, they rejected as oppressive to the dead. Whereas Pliny the elder says that the amount of spices consumed at Poppæa's (the wife of Nero) funeral exceeded a whole year's produce of Arabia—an exaggeration, probably, yet not an insignificant one. More instances of the contrasts between Roman and Teutonic manners might be culled from the 'Germany.' In fact, when two extremes of civilization are brought into immediate contact with each other, it is difficult to avoid a semblance of satire.

Leaving now the question of the drift of Tacitus in writing his 'Germany,' we proceed to examine its contents. He closes the 27th section of it with these words: "Such, on the whole, is the account which I have received of the origin and manners of the entire German people." Evidently he had consulted either eyewitnesses of the "people," or writers on the subject, and one very voluminous author may possibly have been among his instructors. So intimate a friend of the

* Sir T. Browne's 'Urn Burial.'

younger Pliny can hardly have been quite unacquainted with the elder. Now Pliny the natural historian, at the age of twenty-three, served in Germany. He wrote also a history of the Germanic wars in twenty books, and, as was his laudable fashion, collected his materials for them when he was on the spot, for his nephew tells us that he commenced his work before returning from Belgium to Rome. Curious as he was on ethnological matters, he can hardly have spoken of Germanic wars without some mention of the Germanic races. But whether Tacitus were indebted to Pliny or not, the second part of this treatise is more perplexing than useful to ethnologists, although it has long been a field for much controversy about German names, places, and pedigrees. For such inquiries, indeed, with a few exceptions, the ancients were very poorly equipped. Both Greeks and Romans looked down with contempt on all languages except their own, and thus deprived themselves of one of the most valuable pass-keys to a history of nations.

The Germany described by Tacitus is bounded on the west and the south by the Rhine and the Danube; on the east by the Dacians and Sarmatians; and on the north and north-west by the ocean. But this area is far too large if we admit into it pure German races alone. In the time of Domitian or Trajan but little was known of the population near the Elbe, still less of that between that river and the Vistula. Roman generals, indeed, had penetrated the country as far as the left bank of the Elbe; but they speedily withdrew from it, and had little leisure, whether advancing or retreating, to make themselves familiar with the inhabitants, their manners or modes of life. Such knowledge as they picked up consisted of reports given by

spies or deserters, by guides who very likely purposely misinformed them—for ignorance in a Roman was security for the German—or by such adventurous hawkers and pedlars as brought to these savage or semi-savage regions the luxuries of more civilized lands. There is reason for believing Tacitus to have confounded Sclavonian with German tribes. Almost the entire region east of the Elbe was inhabited by the former people alone—some centuries later it certainly was so; and there is neither record nor tradition of the Sclaves having expelled the Teutons between the first and ninth centuries of the Christian era.

Ancient historians, when they met with a people whose origin they could not trace, and whose manners and institutions puzzled them, generally put them down as sons of the soil—*aborigines:* and Tacitus is not an exception to this easy mode of meeting a difficulty. Of the Germans he writes; "I regard them as aboriginal, and not mixed at all with other races through immigration or intercourse." Having in mind probably the maritime Greeks and the Phœnicians, he proceeds: "In former times, it was not by land but on shipboard that those who sought to emigrate would arrive; and, beside the perils of rough and unknown seas, who would leave Asia or Africa or Italy for Germany, with its wild country, its inclement skies, its sullen manners and aspect, unless it were his home?" He is nearer the truth in saying that the name Germany is modern and newly introduced. It was introduced, however, by foreigners, but not accepted by the Germans. No common collective term was used by them.

The same physical peculiarities throughout the vast population of Germany confirm him in his persuasion, that "the tribes of Germany are free from all taint of

intermarriage with foreign nations—a distinct, unmixed race like none but themselves." Their common characteristics are these: "All have fierce blue eyes, red hair, huge frames, fit only for a sudden exertion. They are less able to bear laborious work. Heat and thirst they cannot in the least endure; to cold and hunger their climate and their soil inure them."

The debilitation of the German soldiers by heat is more than once mentioned by Roman historians. To his statement that the eyes of the Germans were grey or blue and fierce in expression, and that, compared with Italians, they were "more than common tall," there is nothing to object; but we protest against his assertion that their hair was universally red. Had he been more polite or zealous for truth, he would have limited redness and its usual accompaniment freckles to the male sex alone. The Latin poets are far more civil, and doubtless more just, than the historian on this important point. The yellow hair and blue eyes of their German female captives excited the admiration of the young men of Rome, and the envy of both old and young women. Some of our English readers may be surprised, and perhaps will be glad to be told that the auburn tresses of the Germans fetched a high price in the Roman market; and that the locks which belonged by birth to the wife or daughter of a Teutonic warrior or herdsman, often belonged by purchase to some dark-haired Cynthia, or Lesbia, or Clodia. Again—and surely they knew better than Tacitus could—the old German poets adorned the most beautiful of their heroines with flowing yellow tresses. So omnipotent, indeed, in Domitian's time was the fashion, that ladies who could not afford to buy a Teutonic wig dyed their natural hair auburn or yellow.

But although the Roman ladies imported the ornaments of their German sisters, they were not, it seems, equally zealous in copying their housewifely virtues. Their marriage code was strict; so, indeed, had that of Rome once been. Divorce among the Germans was very rare: and when a sentence of it was inflicted, the punishment was little inferior, if at all, to that of death. There was no occasion to call in the aid of the civil magistrate. The husband was sole judge of his wrong. The culprit was expelled from his house in the presence of her kinsfolk, her hair was shorn, her garments were torn from her back, and she was flogged through the whole village. And the divorce was once and forever; her crime met with no indulgence: the Germans had not arrived at the age of sentimentality; "neither beauty, age, nor wealth would procure the repudiated wife a second husband." In some states the marriage law or usage was even more stern, and Tacitus considers these states the happiest. In them maidens only were given in marriage, and however young they might become widows, they remained widows for life. This was indeed a severe and not very intelligible restraint among a people who were always fighting either with wild beasts or with men nearly as savage. A defeat or a victory, a herd of buffaloes or of wolves, might easily decimate the population of a village, and the number of widows be more than that of wives. However, it was not the men only who were exposed to the chances of war. Women were commonly spectators of their husbands' prowess, and "tradition says that armies already wavering and giving way, have been rallied by women, who, with earnest entreaties and loud shrieks, and bared bosoms, vividly represented the horrors of captivity, which the Germans fear with such extreme

dread on behalf of their women, that the strongest tie by which a state can be bound is the being required to give, among the number of hostages, maidens of noble birth."

Whether the life of a German woman were happier in peace than in war, it is difficult to say. When not engaged in fighting or hunting, the men did nothing except eat, drink, and sleep. The management of the Teutonic household and of the land was made over to the women, the old men, and all the weakest members of a family. Their agricultural toil was probably slight enough, since they scratched rather than ploughed the ground, and the crops of wheat and rye were consequently as small as can well be imagined. Their barley crop was doubtless better, since they extracted from that grain a fermented liquor bearing a certain resemblance to wine. Of this beverage Tacitus speaks with seeming contempt, as all dwellers in a wine land are wont to do of beer or ale potations. He adds, to show the higher civilization of the races on the river-bank—the Rhine—"*they* buy wine." Their food, he says, is of a simple kind, consisting of wild fruit, curdled milk, and fresh game. The barbarians had not arrived at the knowledge of well-kept venison, or grouse, or black-cock. Doubtless the women derived some consolations for their hard life in millinery. They wore indeed "the same dress as the men, except that they generally wrap themselves in linen garments which they embroider with purple." One female fashion has descended from the German ladies to a remote posterity. It seems that to make a sleeve for cloak or tunic passed the skill, so "the upper or lower arm is bare, and the nearest part of the bosom is also exposed." Care of their children, indeed, did not take up much of their

time. "In every household, naked and filthy, they grew up with those stout frames and limbs which we so much admire." Their families were numerous, for we are told, with a well-merited reproof of Roman fathers and mothers, that "to limit the number of their children or to destroy any of their subsequent offspring is accounted infamous." Baby-farming was reserved for the use of more civilized nations.

In one respect the Germans set the Greeks and Romans a good example, and perhaps gave a wholesome hint to more recent times. They did not go so far as to permit their wives and daughters to vote at elections, yet in some sense they admitted women's rights. "They believe," says Tacitus, "that the sex has a certain sanctity and prescience, and they do not despise their counsels, or make light of their answers. We have seen in the days of Vespasian, Veleda, who was long regarded by many as a divinity. In former times, too, they venerated Aurania and many other women, but not with servile flatteries and shameful deifications." This is apparently a parting compliment to the Cæsars, who, if they did not themselves adore, required their subjects to deify imperial wives. The respect which Tacitus displays for these female diviners was bestowed on their prophetic gifts alone, and did not extend to their sex generally; for in his brief account of a tribe called Sitones he says, "They are ruled by a *woman*, so low have they fallen, not merely from freedom, but even from slavery itself."

In these notes on the domestic condition of the Germans, it is hardly possible to mistake the purpose of Tacitus. In the hardy lives and warlike activity of the Germans he glances at the extravagance and luxury of the Roman nobles of his time. In their pov-

erty, a consequence of their ignorance and indolence when at peace, in their chastity, politic because of their poverty, he saw an image, though a rude one, of those ages of Rome when consuls drove their own ploughs, or "roasted turnips on a Sabine farm." In many a German hovel might be found a counterpart of a Cato or a Siccius Dentatus, but not one of a Sejanus or a Tigellinus; in many a German swamp or forest dwelt a Cornelia and her young Gracchi, an Agrippina, a chaste and fruitful wife, but neither a Messalina nor a Poppæa.

The following sketch of a German village has led some to suppose it drawn by an eyewitness:—

"The natives of Germany have no cities; they do not even tolerate closely contiguous dwellings. They live scattered and apart, just as a spring, a meadow, or a wood has attracted them. Their villages they do not arrange in our fashion, with the buildings connected and joined together; but every person surrounds his dwelling with an open space, either as a precaution against the disasters of fire, or because they do not know how to build. No use is made by them of stone or tile; they employ timber for all purposes—rude masses, without ornament or attractiveness. Some parts of their buildings they stain more carefully with a clay so clear and bright that it resembles painting, or a colored design. They are wont also to dig out subterranean caves and pile on them great heaps of dung as a shelter from winter, and as a receptacle for the year's produce, for by such places they mitigate the rigor of the cold."

The account of the religion of the Germans given by Tacitus differs materially from that of Cæsar; but the opportunities of the later writer may have been the

better. Mercury, he says, they honored most among deities; at certain seasons they deemed it expedient to propitiate him by the sacrifice of human victims. To Hercules and Mars they offered animals, and a portion of the Suevic nation practised the worship of Isis.

The fondness of both Greek and Roman writers for identifying their own rites and mythology with those of less civilized or imperfectly known countries throws much obscurity on the history of religion generally. It is scarcely necessary to apprise the English reader that Mercury and Hercules, Mars and Isis, were as little known to the Germans as the Syrian Astarte or the Punic Moloch. Cæsar denies the existence of a priestly caste among the Germans, and Tacitus nowhere actually contradicts him; for the "priest of a state" whom he mentions is more akin to the great "medicine-man" of a tribe of American Indians, than to the colleges of the Gaulish Druids, or to the sacred corporations of India, Syria, Egypt and Palestine. In public matters, he says, the gods are invoked by the state priest, in private by the father of the family, and each derives the divine answer through the medium of lots, or small pieces of wood cut from the bough of a fruit-bearing tree. This, however, is only the first step in the inquiry. The answer must be confirmed by augury, and birds by their song or their flight are the organs of the divine will. So far the Roman and German soothsayers were much alike, and probably the less civilized were the more pious of the two, for we do not read of the Teutonic augurs, as we do of the Roman, that when they met one another in the street they found it hard to look grave. Horses, too—and "this," he says, "is peculiar to this people"—were mediums for omens and warnings. What follows has a very oriental aspect,

reminding us of the omen drawn from the neighing of King Darius's horse.* "Kept at the public expense in these same woods and groves are white horses, pure from the taint of earthly labor. These are yoked to a car, and accompanied by the priest and the king or chief of the tribe, who note their neighings and snortings. No species of augury is more trusted, not only by the people and the nobility, but also by the priests, who regard themselves as the ministers of the gods, and the horses as acquainted with their will."

There is a remark by Tacitus, in a graver tone and in a higher mood, corresponding closely with one he makes on the religious belief of the Jews. He appears to have been struck by the purity, if not the sublimity, of the Teutonic creed. "The Germans," he says, "believe that the gods cannot be confined within walls, nor, by reason of the vastness of their nature, be represented under the similitude of any human figure." But although they built not temples nor carved images, they were not without certain places dedicated to national worship. Their shrines were sacred spots in the depth of forests, and the gloom of the shrine symbolized a grave and gloomy ritual. To these sacred recesses they gave the names of their deities, and approached them with awe as the habitation of the unseen powers whom they worshipped. Of these sanctuaries the roof was the sky, the columns were the trees; and the historian, among other contrasts between the Roman and the Teuton of his time, may have had in view the gilded roofs, the marble pillars, and the numerous statues he saw in the Pantheon of Agrippa or the fane of Jupiter in the Capitol.

*Herodotus, iii. 84.

There were kings in many of the German tribes, but their power was not unlimited or arbitrary. The king was expected to expose his person in battle, as well as to command the army. There were two houses of Parliament. The chiefs deliberated about minor matters, the whole tribe about more important ones. The assemblies for debate, except in cases of sudden emergency, were held on certain fixed days, either at new or full moon. Like assemblies of more recent date, the Germans wasted a good deal of time before they applied in earnest to business. A century has not elapsed since members of our House of Commons wore small swords in St. Stephen's Chapel; and the Teutonic legislators sat on their benches of turf armed. "Silence," we are told, was proclaimed by the priests, who, like "Mr. Speaker," did not take part in the debate, but had the right of keeping order. "The king or the chief, according to age, birth, distinction in war or eloquence, is heard more because he has influence to persuade than because he has power to command." Murmurs indicated the 'Noes,' brandishing of spears the 'Ayes,' in this primitive Parliament. Of their skill in husbandry Tacitus has little favorable to say. The vine was yet to be introduced into Rhineland, fruit-trees were rarely if ever planted, and there was a plausible excuse for the omission of orchards. In the first place, the German was a migratory animal; in the next, a fighting one. In either case a stranger or a foe would very likely have been the better for what he had not himself planted or grafted. For cereals the soil generally was too stiff, too sandy, or too wet: to drain the swamps, to irrigate the sand, demanded labor and cost, and the German was too indolent, too poor, and too restless, to undertake anything beyond the

rudest agricultural work. He succeeded better as a grazier,—he often owned vast herds of cattle; but here again the farmer of the south far surpassed him, for his domestic kine were small in size and rough in coat, as inferior to the white breed of Umbria, or the herds that were pastured in the Abruzzi during the summer, and in Apulia during the winter months, as a German boat was to a Roman galley. The horses, like the Cossack ponies, were hardy and capable of enduring long journeys, but shaggy and low of stature. The Batavians alone among the northern nations had chargers fit for cavalry, and supplied the legions with excellent steeds and skilful and bold riders.

His admiration of the virtues, as he esteemed them, did not blind Tacitus to the vices of the Germans. Of these the most glaring were drunkenness and gambling. Like all races in a state of barbarism, the German, so long as food was not at hand, endured hunger with stoical patience; but when he had it he made up for abstinence by excess. But drunkenness was his capital failing. Like the gods in Walhalla, these mortals gloried in passing whole days and nights at table; and the hospitable board was often stained with the blood of some of the company. Still, in their cups there seems to have been some discretion; for says Tacitus,—

"It is at their feasts that they generally consult on the reconciliation of enemies, on the forming of matrimonial alliances, on the choice of chiefs, finally even on peace and war; for they think that at no time is the mind more open to simplicity of purpose or more warmed to noble aspirations. A race without either natural or acquired cunning, they disclose their hidden thoughts in the freedom of festivity. Thus, the sentiments of all having been discovered is laid bare, the

discussion is renewed on the following day, and from each occasion its own peculiar advantage is derived. They deliberate when they have no power to dissemble; they resolve when error is impossible."

As to their gambling, the Germans appear to have surpassed the most civilized of mankind. It was a serious occupation even when they were sober; and so venturesome were they about gaining or losing, that "when every other resource has failed, on the last and final throw they stake the freedom of their own persons. The loser goes into voluntary slavery. Though the younger and stronger, he suffers himself to be bound and sold."

Among the numerous varieties of the human race who flocked to Rome, the Germans had many representatives. They usually formed the Cæsar's guard, as the Scotch archers at first, and the Swiss *mousquetaires* afterwards, did that of the French kings. The cavalry was no longer composed of Roman knights or Italians, and the Batavian horse had become an almost indispensable adjunct to the legions. A brother of the Cheruscan Arminius served in the Roman army, and boasted of his services and loyalty to Augustus and Tiberius. Civilis. the Batavian chief, had been trained in a Roman barrack, and had smarted under a centurion's rod. Here, then, was at hand an ample supply of men able to enlighten an historian of the German people—an advantage, however, of which Tacitus, so far at least as ethnology is concerned, seems not to have availed himself to any great extent.

We now turn from this curious, and in part perhaps fanciful, account of the German nations. In what relation it stands to the other writings of Tacitus can never be known. It is the only one of them that has

not an introductory preface. It bears some marks of not being completed; and may very possibly have been an early draft or an abandoned design of a full history of the German wars similar in kind to the one already mentioned—Pliny the elder's.

CHAPTER IV.

THE 'ANNALS.'

TIBERIUS.

THE title of this work may not be inviting to some English readers. It may suggest to them the idea of a note-book in which rough materials are collected for a complete and polished narrative. They have doubtless observed in the most attractive historical works frequent references to monkish annals—to Camden's and Strype's, for instance, the authorities for much dreary political or ecclesiastical controversy. But no one need anticipate in the 'Annals' of Tacitus any dullness. Far from being the dry bones of some purposed record, they are among the most signal examples of thoughtful, interesting, and brilliant narration. They abound in anecdote; their by-ways are often not less pleasant than the main road; they take the reader into many lands; introduce him to many forms of life and manners. The keystone of the arch is indeed Rome and its Cæsar, but the arch of description itself is wide in its span: the 'Annals' are the "roof and crown" of the mighty master's genius.

The 'Annals' commence with the death of Augustus, A.D., 14, and, when in a perfect state, closed with the

death of Nero, in 68. In them were related the events of fifty-four years. They are less mutilated than the 'History,' yet they have in some respects suffered far more severely, inasmuch as we lose in the later of the author's works many more important scenes and events than were treated of in the earlier. Of the fifth book of the 'Annals' the greater part has perished; the seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth no longer exist, and of the eleventh a considerable part is missing. By the imperfect condition of the fifth book we are left to learn from other and inferior writers, many of whom lived long after the time of Tiberius, the real character of Sejanus's conspiracy. By the entire absence of four books we are without such a narrative as Tacitus alone could pen, of the whole of Caligula's reign and of the first five years of that of Claudius. By the mutilation of the sixteenth, we are deprived of the necessary materials for understanding the causes and motives of the revolt which hurled from a throne he had so long abused the last of the Julian Cæsars.

It is impossible to attempt giving a mere abstract of the 'Annals' as they have come down to us. Condensation is seldom satisfactory: an epitome can hardly fail to be more or less obscure. We must be content with dwelling on a few only of the more striking scenes or persons delineated by the historian. The first six books may be regarded as a portrait of Tiberius. He, present or absent from the scenes of action, whether they relate to war or peace, is the pivot on which the machine of government revolves. He was neither, like Claudius, the servant of his own freedmen, nor, like Nero, the companion of singers, dancers, gladiators, and charioteers. History presents few characters so difficult to decipher as that of Ti-

berius. Even Tacitus's summary of his virtues and vices can hardly be reconciled with facts or consistency. Most unpopular with every class at Rome, and in its immediate neighborhood, he was regarded by the provincials as a wise, a temperate, and even a beneficent sovereign. It almost seems as if there had been one emperor in the capital and another outside its walls.

After relating the death of Tiberius, Tacitus says—"He ruled the Roman state with absolute sway. His manners also varied with the conditions of his fortune. His conduct was exemplary and his reputation high while in a private capacity, or holding dignities under Augustus. While Germanicus and Drusus were yet alive, his manners were reserved and mysterious, artfully assuming the merit of virtues to which he had no claim. While his mother survived, his character exhibited a compound of good and evil. While he loved or feared Sejanus, though detested for his cruelties, he observed a secrecy and caution in the gratification of his evil passions; but at last when all restraints of shame and fear were removed, and he was left to the uncontrolled bent of his genius, he broke out into acts of atrocious villainy and revolting depravity." *

The historian who penned this very antithetical character, opens his fourth book with a high testimony to Tiberius during the first nine years of his reign. He ruled indeed with absolute sway, and so, virtually, had Augustus done before him: it was the "hard condition twin-born with their greatness;" but while his predecessor had the art to veil with roses the chains he imposed, it was always the ill-luck of Tiberius to display them, and often inopportunely. For a period of

* Annals, vi. ch. 51.

eight years at least he "intrusted to the senate all the public and all private business of importance: to the leading members of it he allowed liberty of debate: he checked flattery of himself; in his preferments he was guided by merit, by ancient nobility, by renown in war, by ability in civil accomplishments, insomuch that his appointments to office were universally approved. Consuls and prætors retained the usual distinctions of their offices; inferior magistrates their proper authority; and the laws, except in cases of treason, were beneficially administered. The tithes, taxes, and public revenues were managed by companies of Roman knights: the Cæsar's own affairs were conducted by men of eminent probity, some of whom were known to him only by their good repute; and when once engaged by him, they were retained without any restriction of term, and most of them grew old in the same employment. Dearth of provisions at times distressed the people, but through no fault of the prince, who spared neither pains nor expense to remedy the deficiency of food, whether it were owing to storms at sea delaying the corn-fleets, or to bad harvests. He took care that the provinces should not be oppressed by new taxes, and that the already existing burdens should not be rendered intolerable by the strictness or rapacity of the farmers of the revenue." "My sheep," it was a favorite maxim of his, "may be shorn, but not flayed by you." Corporal punishments and confiscation of goods were unknown. Many a noble owned far more landed property in Italy than the emperor did: many a rich man possessed more freedmen and slaves: and the behavior of the imperial slaves was modest, which could not always be said of the senatorial bondmen. If he had any suits with

private persons, he referred them as if he had been a simple citizen to the courts and the law.

Tiberius, when the death of Augustus was publicly announced—he had not arrived in time from the Dalmatian coast to be present at the last moments of the dying Cæsar—entered at once upon his important duties as commander of the army, governor-general of the provinces, and tribune of the people; and thus had virtually in his hands all the essentials of imperial power. Secure of these, he awaited, until after the funeral of Augustus, his nomination as Prince of the Senate. And at this point, in the view taken of him by Tacitus, began that system of dissimulation which he followed through a long reign. It might have been more honest to demand, but it was perhaps more politic, as well as decent, to court the suffrages of the senate. The account of the Cæsar's hesitation in accepting, of the senators' eager servility, in imploring him to consent to accept, the only dignity that was not his already, is among the historian's masterpieces of description. Tacitus says that Tiberius never faltered, except in the presence of the conscript-fathers. One motive for his hesitation was a dread that in his nephew Germanicus he might find a formidable rival, and there was not time to assure himself of the loyalty and honorable feelings of that darling of the Roman people. Another but less obvious cause for delay, was his repugnance to be regarded as the nominee of his mother Livia, who not only at the moment had secured her son's quiet accession, but also had obtained for him from the reluctant Augustus every office comprised in the *imperium* —except that of Prince of the Senate. Moreover, there were members on the senatorial benches whom the late emperor had suggested might contest with the son of

Livia the succession to the empire. The suspicions were idle: the senate had been too long trained in subservience to have a voice of its own: but, although idle, they were not ineffectual, as the objects of them found in due time to their cost. Perhaps there was yet another motive for real or affected hesitation in Tiberius on this occasion. He loved to read men's thoughts; to analyze their motives; to balance in his own scale their words and deeds, and to draw his own conclusions as to what was merely lip-service, and what was a real desire that he should ascend the vacant throne. Their votes and voices he could easily have constrained: he preferred to draw out the actual sentiments of his courtiers. His dissimulation will hardly be accounted unwise, if we bear in mind that Tiberius at no one period of his life was a favorite of the Roman people. Their love and hopes had been lavished on his deceased brother Drusus, and now were transferred, in measure heaped and running over, to the son of Drusus, the young, handsome, brave, and gracious Germanicus.

More formidable dangers than political intrigues occupied the attention of Tiberius at the very moment he commenced his reign. The legions in Pannonia broke out into mutiny as soon as they heard of the death of Augustus; and their conduct was the more alarming from the fact that six years before there had been in the same quarter a revolt of the same troops, which Tiberius himself had been sent to put down, and which, as it proved, he had "scotched but not killed." There was the more reason for prompt action, because the mutineers could in a fortnight reach Italy, and in three weeks the capital itself, which was then slenderly supplied with guards, for the most effective divisions of the army were stationed in Upper or Lower Germany.

The mutiny was sufficiently grave to render it necessary for the emperor to despatch his son Drusus, and one of the prætorian prefects, Ælius Sejanus, with a formidable force of cavalry and veteran infantry, to the Pannonian camp. A timely eclipse, however, so disheartened the rebels, that, after committing many atrocities, they returned to their standards under the impression that the gods frowned on their revolt.

But if the Pannonian revolt was a spark, a mutiny of the legions in Upper and Lower Germany threatened to be a devouring flame. For there, in both provinces, the disaffected soldiers were in the immediate neighborhood of the free Germans, proud of their demolition of Varus and his army five years before, and ever watching for an opportunity to cross to the left bank of the Rhine. The most popular general of the day, the Cæsar Germanicus, was in command of eight legions—a force that with auxiliaries consisted of at least 60,000 men. Tiberius might affect to dread some half-dozen of the nobles, but he was sincere in his apprehensions of his adopted son. Him indeed he suspected unjustly. The noble and loyal disposition of Germanicus was a riddle to the moody and timid master of thirty legions, and he probably distrusted him the more for a straightforward dealing of which he was himself incapable. To hear from successive messengers that the legions of the Rhine were in revolt; that they had offered to proclaim their commander Cæsar; that they had demanded and received from him a *largesse;* that not merely Germanicus, but also his wife, Agrippina, were the darlings of the mutineers; and that even his little grandson Caius, the future Caligula, was their pet,—might alarm a stouter heart than Tiberius possessed. The name of Germani-

cus alone would have thrown open the city gates, and the servile aristocracy would have joyfully deposed, and probably put to death, a chief whom they disliked, and repeated their oath of allegiance to a Cæsar, beloved equally by senate, soldiers, and people

The mutineers expiated their crimes by an apparently promiscuous slaughter of their leaders. But both summer and winter camps were become odious to them, and the blood of German foes alone could, in their opinion, wash out the stain of their rebellion and sanguinary remorse. Germanicus, though autumn was already advanced, hurried them over the Rhine, and indulged them with a brief campaign. To trace his steps through two following campaigns in Germany, would demand far more space than we can afford, and also weary the reader with details of events which had no important consequences, and in which the only character of any interest is that of Arminius, the Cheruscan chief. The story of this German hero indeed belongs more to the annals of Augustus than to those of Tiberius, since it was in the earlier reign of the two that he achieved, by a combination of craft and valor, the destruction of Varus and his legions. Against Germanicus his success was far less signal, although by skilfully contrived movements and indomitable energy he baffled the invaders, seriously thinned their ranks, and more than once reduced the Roman general to straits which, but for the discipline of the legions, would a second time have lost Rome a general and an army. In 16 A.D. Germanicus was recalled from the Rhine. He was accorded a magnificent triumph, of which to Roman spectators the most attractive feature was the presence of the hero and his five children riding in the same

chariot Yet this portion of the spectacle excited not merely sentiments of pride and hope, but also gloomy anticipations of the future. The people called to mind, "that popular favor had proved calamitous to his father Drusus; that his uncle Marcellus was snatched in his youth from the ardent affections of the populace; and that ever short-lived and unfortunate were the favorites of the Roman people." The prediction, not uttered with bated breath, doubtless reached the ears of Tiberius, and bore baneful fruit in later years, when his "fears stuck deep" in Agrippina and her sons.

The presence of Germanicus, now consul, was urgently needed in the Eastern provinces, where the death of Augustus had given rise to disturbances on the Armenian and Parthian frontiers, and where, also, the civil government appears to have required the presence of a vice-emperor. The removal of the young and successful general is ascribed by Tacitus to the fear or jealousy of Tiberius, but there is no reason to impute such motives to him. Had Tacitus lived in the reign of Tiberius, we should perhaps have been told by him, that the Claudian Cæsar had seen much service in the Rhenish and Danubian districts, and knew better than Germanicus how to deal with barbarians. So long as the legions were burning their villages, devastating their fields, and chasing them across morass, forest, and river, the Germans were tolerably united in a common cause. Whereas, rid of the invader, they were pretty sure to quarrel with one another; and thus, by their civil wars, they served Rome far more effectually than she could serve herself by the expenditure of blood and treasure. The campaigns of Germanicus had really no important result. The Germans were often defeated,

but never conquered; and perhaps a Teutonic Tacitus would have told of more Roman reverses than the Roman one thought meet to chronicle. From the 'Annals' alone it is clear that the invaders suffered severely from the natural difficulties of a land void of roads and bridges, and studded with swamps and pathless woods. Clear, also, it is, that even in pitched battle the Romans' rank and file suffered severely, and were cumbered by their own armor; while their lightly-clad opponents fought with ease and agility, knee-deep in water, or amid the gloom of a primeval forest. And however successful at the opening, Germanicus was with one exception—his first inroad—always unfortunate at the close of his campaigns. He lost his flotilla—he sacrificed many hundreds, at the very least, of valuable soldiers in extricating himself from the sodden and slippery marshes, many, also, in cutting his way through forest and ambush, many by sudden and unexpected assaults, and many by the false reports of his guides.

By appointing Germanicus to the viceroyalty of the Eastern provinces, the emperor might seem to have ceased to fear him, and to have gratified the wishes of all ranks in Rome. The choice, indeed, was, to all appearance, most happy. Had the tribes been polled, he was the person whom they would have voted for unanimously: had the senate been consulted, there would have been no division: had the name of their favorite been referred to the army, there would have been a universal clashing of shields, and loud and ringing huzzas in assent. But Tiberius marred the grace of this appointment by accompanying it with that of one who was notoriously an enemy of the proconsul. Among the proudest of Roman houses, at the time, was that of the Pisones. Calpurnius Piso had his full share

of the family pride, and saw in Germanicus, not the hero of the people, but the descendant of the Plebian Drusi. Yet of all the magnates of the time, it was this Piso who was chosen for the post of 'coadjutor' to the young proconsul.

The story of the later days of Germanicus is one of several enigmas we find in the 'Annals.' He insinuates that there was a court-cabal against him and his wife—the one was to be narrowly watched by Piso, the other by Piso's wife Plancina. In the latter suspicion there was, perhaps, the more truth; for Livia, whose influence was still great with Tiberius, did not conceal her hatred of Agrippina. The historian hints that there were ugly stories about the cause of Germanicus's death—idle stories, perhaps; yet it could not be denied that whether to gratify his own malice, or in obedience to secret instructions received by him, Piso thwarted every plan or movement of his chief, and misinterpreted his words and acts. Certainly, if they had such orders, Piso and Plancina most punctiliously obeyed them. Go whither he might, do whatever he might, privately or officially, the conduct of Germanicus, and without question of Agrippina as well, was reported of unfavorably to the Cæsar on the Palatine and his mother. As a token of respect for the fountainhead of Western philosophy and literature, and to display his reverence for the birthplace of so many illustrious statesmen and philosophers, orators, and poets, Germanicus, during a brief visit to Athens, laid aside every outward symbol of his high office, and, attended by a single lictor, walked in the streets, and visited the temples, the schools, the gymnasia, and the theatres of the city of Pallas. This, certainly harmless, and probably sincere, homage to the memory of the mighty dead, appeared

to the jaundiced eye of Piso an affront to the dignity of Rome. "Was it seemly in Cæsar's son to be civil to such a pack of hybrid vagabonds as then were the Athenian people? Was it proper for one who represented the majesty of the empire, to curry favor with the offscouring of various nations, with fellows whose great-grandsires had leagued with Mithridates against Sylla, and whose grandsires had fought with Antony against Augustus?" During an interval of business, the proconsul sailed up the Nile and contemplated the great works of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies. This pilgrimage, when reported to Tiberius, gave him much offence. And he severely censured Germanicus for entering the capital of Egypt without permission from the prince. "For Augustus," he wrote, "among other secret rules of power, had appropriated Egypt and restrained the senators and dignified Roman knights from going thither without license; as he apprehended that Italy might be distressed with famine by every one who seized that province—the key to the empire by sea and land, and defensible by a small garrison of men against large armies." In neglecting to obtain a passport, Germanicus was indiscreet; yet, surely, by refusing the empire, when proffered by his soldiers, he had given a sufficient pledge of loyalty. Even a governor-general, accompanied by a few tribunes and centurions, on a journey of pleasure, need not have reasonably alarmed the lord of thirty legions.

All cause for fear or jealousy was soon at an end. Within a few weeks after his return from Egypt the hope and pride of the empire was stretched on a sick-bed, and passed away from friends and lovers, from foes and spies, in the capital of Syria, Antioch. Often as one of their beloved princes died unexpectedly, the

Roman people, with a credulity not uncommon in modern Europe, believed that he had met with foul play. The most absurd stories of magical arts and poisoning sprang up, and were accepted by the populace, and doubtless by many dressed in senatorial attire. At the trial of Piso for the imputed murder of his commander, and contempt of his orders, the disobedience of the coadjutor was proved, but the charge of poisoning quite broke down, and, if we consider the circumstances, very justly. Even for a Piso it was not easy to drug the food of a man at his own table, in the presence of numerous guests and attendants. The illness of which Germanicus died appears to have been some species of fever. He had been suddenly transplanted from a cold and moist to a hot and dry climate—from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Orontes. His vexations were many; the acts and demeanor of Piso, and perhaps of Plancina also, can hardly have failed to have excited suspicions that his coadjutor had some secret warrant for his conduct. When a man is laid low by fever, some extra vexation is not unfavorable to the disease.

If it be not easy to gather from the records we possess a satisfactory portrait of Tiberius, it is even more difficult to decipher the character of Sejanus. We are assured by Tacitus that the loss of Germanicus caused Tiberius no regret; on the contrary, he accounted that event among the "blessings of his reign." Fortune, he proceeds, now began to change the scene—that is, in the ninth year of his principate—and a train of disasters followed. The emperor began to throw off the mask—either by tyrannizing himself, or encouraging and supporting others in tyrannical proceedings.

"The origin and cause of this change," he says, "are

attributable to Ælius Sejanus, commander of the Prætorian Guards. He was born at Bolsena [Vulsinii]; his father was Seius Strabo, a Roman knight; in early youth he attached himself to Caius Cæsar, grandson of the deified Augustus. By various acts he subsequently gained such an ascendancy over Tiberius, that though he was close and mysterious in his intercourse with others, he threw off all restraint and reserve with him. His person was hardy and equal to fatigues; his spirit daring; expert in disguising his own iniquities, prompt to spy out the failings of others; at once fawning and imperious"—this is no uncommon combination; "with an exterior of assumed modesty, his heart insatiably lusted for supreme domination." "And with this view he engaged sometimes in profusion, largesses, and luxury; but more frequently gave himself to business and watching, practices no less dangerous, when counterfeited by ambition for the acquisition of power."

That such a person as Sejanus should ever have existed, Tacitus ascribes to the wrath of the gods against the Roman state, to which this minister "was equally fatal in the height of his power and his death." Had he confined the fatality to Tiberius himself, we should have been the more inclined to agree with the historian; he in fact ascribes to the minister the political depravation of the emperor.

The first important measure of Sejanus was to concentrate the prætorians, or imperial body-guard, in one camp. Hitherto this division of the army had been quartered either in the capital or in neighboring towns. They appear to have been billeted on private householders or lodged in taverns, and were doubtless, in the one case, a nuisance to their hosts, while, in the other, they were put in the way of evil companions.

Viewed at the moment it was effected, and not judged of by its results, this collection of the guards into one camp appears to have been a prudent measure—one that even a wise and honest minister might have devised or sanctioned. It assured the Government of ready support when needed; it would protect respectable citizens from the fury of a Roman mob, like those which occasionally disgraced the later years of the commonwealth. It was, in fact, a very similar innovation to that in our own history, when a standing army took the place of a militia; and it was more the fault of the time than of the change which rendered the prætorians the tools of Cæsar, or the arbiters or donors of imperial power. An Augustus, who knew how to win the affections as well as the respect of his subjects, could dispense with a camp near at hand; but for a Tiberius, who possessed no attractive qualities, and who was, perhaps, as much disliked by the citizens as he was feared by the nobles, such a bulwark may have been indispensable.

Plots, or the suspicion of them, thickened very soon after the reins of government were placed in the hands of Sejanus. The upper classes, who looked on the Claudian prince as a supplanter of the Julian line, yet more deeply resented the intrusion of one whom they regarded as an upstart—the obscure offspring of a borough town (*municipalis*) having no ancestral claims on their respect, and whose family name had never been inscribed on the calendar of consuls (*Fasti*). Like the favorite counsellor of Augustus, Sejanus came of an old Etruscan house; but Mæcenas had never risen above the rank of a knight, and was modest in his demeanor and habits of life. On the contrary, the man whom Tiberius delighted to honor was notorious

for his arrogance, and the higher he rose in public rank or imperial favor, the more he was fawned upon and hated. When Cæsar indeed proclaimed the virtues of this lucky adventurer, who would dare to call them in question? In everything the emperor, now advanced in years, weary of public business, and conscious that he was detested by a majority of the Roman citizens, gave way to Sejanus. The weak bent to the strong will—the man who could rise no higher to the man who was still climbing up ambition's ladder. So ostentatious was his favor, perhaps, for a while, so sincere his friendship, that, in his speeches and letters to the senate, Tiberius frequently made honorable mention of Sejanus. He was his guide, his other self, in the government of the empire. Careless of public honors himself, shunning rather than courting applause from his subjects, Tiberius was gratified when such distinctions were conferred on his minister. He permitted statues and busts of the Etruscan to be placed beside his own in the forum and the law courts, in the prætorian barracks and the camps of the legions; nor did he evince any jealousy when the senate decreed one altar to Clemency, another altar to Friendship, and set up around them portraits of himself and Sejanus.

The most terrible weapon in the hands of Sejanus was that furnished by the public informer (*delatores*). It did not originate with him, but he worked the machine with an energy unknown before. He had many reasons for rendering the function of informer more effective. The Cæsar was timid and suspicious, and easily persuaded, after a while, that his life or his authority was assailed by the persons who counted his days, arraigned his policy, or spoke of his private conduct. The nobles regarded the minister with envy and contempt—with

the one for his nearness to the Cæsar, with the other for his obscure origin. Again, Sejanus could not entertain a hope of succeeding Tiberius, unless he could isolate him from his own family and his immediate friends. "The imperial house full of Cæsars," writes Tacitus, "the emperor's son in the vigor of manhood, and his grandsons grown up, were obstacles to his ambition; and because to cut them off all at once was dangerous, the success of his treacherous plot required that the horrid deeds should be perpetrated by slow degrees." From the army and the populace he expected and experienced no opposition. The former, although they were Roman soldiers, were rarely Roman by birth, and, even if they knew the names of old and noble families, they were ignorant of the deeds by which the Fabii, the Scipios, the Cornelii, or the Gracchi had raised themselves to the consulate and the senatorial bench. The latter, with the mean spirit of a mob in all times, rejoiced in the humiliation of men of rank, and saw in every illustrious victim a kind of sacrifice to their own envy. A Roman mob was always ready to cry, "A bas les aristocrats!" and a London or Parisian one is always ready to do the like. Among the earliest and certainly the most conspicuous victims struck down by Sejanus was Drusus, the emperor's only son. But the direct heir to the purple was beyond the informer's shaft: and the prince-imperial was murdered by the aid of his young wife Livia, whom an adulterous connection had previously brought into the snares of the ambitious minister. It was against the widow of Germanicus, her sons, and their adherents, that he first let slip his blood-hounds. With Agrippina it was less difficult to deal. She was indeed far from friendless among the great: she was the darling of the Roman people: and the

soldiers reverenced in her the relict of their deceased and beloved commander. But the great could gradually be mown down, by the aid of informers. The unarmed populace were helpless; and the victims of information were despatched with a secrecy that eluded the notice of the soldiers. Agrippina herself afforded opportunities to her foes. With all his admiration of her, as a sample of the woman of a bygone age, Tacitus does not conceal the infirmities of her temper. Her haughty demeanor, her unguarded tongue, her bursts of passion, were the source of many sorrows to herself, of her ultimate ruin, and of that of many of her friends and partisans. The last injunctions of the dying Germanicus were addressed to her. "Then turning to his wife," writes the annalist, "he adjured her by her remembrance of him, by their common children, to divest herself of her unbending spirit and bow to fortune in the storm of her anger; and, on her return to the city, not to irritate those who were more than a match for her, by a competition for the mastery. So much was said by him openly, and more in secret." The injunction was in vain: year by year the number of her supporters diminished: the brave and loyal were driven to suicide, or into exile, or handed over to the executioner: the timid forsook her or became spies on her actions and words; and she herself, by occasional indiscretions, nursed the jealousy or incurred the anger of Tiberius. Of her three sons one only survived her; and she herself, after undergoing countless indignities, died, it is said, of starvation in the island of Ponza (Pontia).

In his designs against the family of Germanicus, Sejanus, if not aided, was not crossed by the aged widow of Augustus: To Agrippina and her children Livia felt, and did not conceal it, all the hatred of a

stepmother. The favor which she extended to her eldest son Tiberius, seems not to have included his brother Drusus—assuredly not Drusus' sons. The despotic and dangerous old woman, whom, for her crafty and intriguing spirit, Caligula called "a Ulysses in petticoats"—was more likely to cherish the jealousy of the Cæsar, and applaud the plans of his minister, than to shelter from their cruelty Agrippina and her orphaned children.

The function of Public Informer (*delator*) is one of the most perplexing features in Cæsarian history. It is hard to imagine life endurable under such a system of police. It affected every order of society except the lowest,—senators, knights, magistrates, and military officers—the busy, the idle—the very young, the very old—men conspicuous for their virtues, and sometimes also for their honorable poverty, and men notorious for their vices, and sometimes for their wealth. A harmless country-gentlemen was not more secure in his park than was the occupier of a stately mansion on the Palatine. The informer's bolt was not "the arrow which flies in darkness." There was nothing in the system like the privacy of the Inquisition, of the Vehmgericht, or the Venetian Council of Ten. The emissaries of a Delator did not stick a citation on the pillow of his victim, nor drop it into a lion's mouth—the government post-office. Whatever was done by the Roman informer was done openly. He was not ashamed of his calling: it brought him money and distinction: and he gloried in the means that raised him from obscurity. And yet when no one was secure, men revelled as well as lived under this reign of terror, drank old Falernian and feasted on Lucrine oysters and Umbrian boars as cheerfully as

if they were as sure of the morrow as of its sunrise and sunset.

Political eloquence, at least on any grand scale, expired with the commonwealth, for where there are no parties in a State there can be but few occasions for debate. In the law courts, at the city-prætor's tribunal, and when there was an impeachment argued before the senate, there was still a field for wordy war; and if we may trust to the reminiscences of the elder Seneca, to the reports of Tacitus, to Pliny's Letters, to Quintilian, and other writers of the time, many of the Delators were persons of great ability, and by no means contemptible as public speakers. Some of them were of ignoble birth, others were scions of ancient families, whom, whether high-born or low-born, ambition, poverty, or fashion—for there are endemics in public life as well as in certain states of the air—impelled to take up the profession of public prosecutor. Knights and senators did not blush to make a traffic of their eloquence and accomplishments; while a "new man"—that is, one who had no "blue blood" in his veins or waxen images in his hall—might, in dragging a culprit, or quite as likely an innocent person, before the senate, complaisantly compare himself to a tribune of the people in bygone days. In case of conviction, a portion of the fine fell regularly to their share, and it was often augmented by a special remuneration also. But money was not their sole reward. At a later time there was coined the proverb that Galen—a good medical practice — brought wealth; and Justinian — briefs at the bar—led to honors.* The informer, however, besides filling his pocket, reaped an ample harvest of political

* "Dat Galenus opes, dat Justinianus honores."

eminence and notoriety akin to fame. Hardly any one of this class of them, according to Tacitus or Pliny, possessed any private virtues. They were as covetous as they were unprincipled; but their greed of gain was limited to getting it, for the most part; they squandered their enormous fees, bribes, or gratuities as rapidly as they pocketed them. Frequently they suffered the misery they had inflicted: a rich informer was an irresistible temptation to a brother of the craft; or a Cæsar whose profusion had drained the treasury, made little scruple in banishing or strangling a prosperous Delator, and seizing, for his own use, his goods, chattels, and investments. When a Cæsar like Vespasian or Trajan wore the purple robe, it was an evil day for informers; for then, if not handed over to the executioner, they were sent to some island prison, and it sometimes happened that the ship which carried them never reached any port.

Many more pages than we can afford might be occupied by an account of the rise and fall of these pernicious allies of despotism. We can only narrate a few of their exploits. It was accounted a crime against majesty—that is the concrete State—to perform before an emperor's effigy, even on a coin or ring, any act which would be deemed indecent in the presence of the emperor himself, such as to strip a slave for chastisement, or even to strip one's self for the bath. No public charge against an officer of the State or an illustrious citizen came to be thought complete, unless one of disrespect towards the Cæsar was annexed to it as a codicil. Silanus, proconsul of Asia, a friend of the deceased Germanicus, a partisan of the widowed Agrippina, was accused of extortion in his province. But no sooner was the impeachment published than a consular,

an ædile, and a prætor brought other irrelevant charges against him,—among others, that he had profaned the divinity of Augustus and disparaged the majesty of Tiberius. Two profligate women of high birth, Apuleia and Lepida were impeached for adultery and generally scandalous lives. But the accuser thought to strengthen his case by imputing to the former of them expressions of disrespect towards Augustus and Tiberius, and even the empress-mother Livia Augusta; and to the latter the crime of consulting soothsayers about the destinies of the imperial family—of course including in her inquiry the important question, "How long is his majesty likely to live?" For a while it was necessary that the defendant should be proved guilty of some act or deed. Afterwards words spoken or written were admitted in evidence of disaffection, and many a scroll was burnt by the hangman in the Forum; and several authors died suddenly, because a volume in which Brutus and Cassius were extolled, or an unlucky epigram or pasquinade was found, was traced to their pen."

Impeachment of conspicuous citizens and party-leaders was no novelty in Rome: the commonwealth had bequeathed it to the empire, and the empire did little more than place it on a new platform. Laws on the subject of treason to the State (*majestas*) had existed from the days of the kings. Indictments of political or personal opponents were among the privileges and the barriers of public freedom, and the brightest laurels in the orator's crown were the convictions of a Scipio Asiaticus, a Verres, or a Catiline. But when the emperor united in his own person the various functions, civil and military, of the republic—when he was consul, prince of the senate, censor, proconsul-general, commander of the army, and tribune

of the people—when he could legally as well as logically say, *L'état, c'est moi*—the law of *majestas* applied to his person alone, since he was the only representative of the nobles, the knights, the people, the legions, and the subjects of Rome. Consequently he was the target at which all satirical arrows were aimed, the object of every conspiracy, the aim of every rebel. The Julian law, borrowed by the first Cæsar from Sulla's legislation, but considerably modified, was confirmed and extended by his successor: but neither the popular Julius nor the prudent Augustus availed themselves of it, except under extreme provocation. It was not so with Tiberius. He was, out of a camp, a timid man; and after he had reigned several years, and his age was in the sere and yellow leaf, the consciousness of his own unpopularity, and the knowledge of machinations against him, exaggerated his fears into cruelty. The history of the public informers accordingly opens with this portion of the 'Annals,' and does not close until Domitian fell under the blows of a few conspirators whose own lives depended on their taking his.

It is creditable to Tiberius that he at first struggled against the informers. He rebuked their officious zeal: he would not permit a charge of high treason (*majestas*) to be mixed up with one of misgovernment of a province or scandal in private life. He met such accusations in a spirit worthy of a great monarch: he was, in these respects, less timid than our James I., less vindictive than either Philip II. of Spain or Louis XIV. In his better moods he commended liberty of speech. "In a free State," he was wont to say, "both mind and tongue should be free." But he was borne down by the current of the time. He was wearied by

the servility of the senate: he was irritated by his own unpopularity, by pasquinades, by the rumor, if not by the reality, of plots against himself. He became, as he grew older, more and more distrustful of all about him, and when he discovered that even his own familiar friend, the man whom he had taken to his bosom and treated as almost his partner in the empire, was false, mercy and justice alike departed from him, and the moody self-exile in Capri "let slip the dogs" of information against all who had followed and flattered, or were imagined to have done so, the arch-traitor Ælius Sejanus.

As regards his fame, no step Tiberius ever took was more fatal to it than his retiring to Capri. It was a mystery which no one of his subjects could fathom; but it was also a mystery that invited the worst interpretations. In the days of the commonwealth, a tribune of the people had increased his popularity by instructing an architect so to build him a house on the Capitoline Hill, that all his fellow-citizens might at any moment be able to see what he was doing. It was a similar seclusion in his Alban villa that rendered Domitian more obnoxious than ever to all classes in Rome. "No one," says Tacitus, "could have imagined that a Roman would voluntarily abandon his country for a period of eleven years." To modern ears the historian's words sound strangely. Capri was not so far from Rome as Edinburgh is from London, yet we should think the phrase extravagant, if a man, by going to the capital of Scotland, were accused of "abandoning" Britain. Far other import had the words in Roman ears.

Tiberius was in his sixty-seventh year when, on a pretext of dedicating a temple to Jupiter at Capua and

to Augustus at Nola, he turned his back on Rome for ever. He was attended to the beautiful island of Capri, where he lived in seclusion for eleven years, by a very slender retinue;—by his minister Sejanus, now the ostensible if not the sole governor of the empire; by one of the most eminent lawyers of the day, Cocceius Nerva; by one other senator, by one knight; by an astrologer or two—Chaldæans as they were then usually called; and by a few learned Greeks. Busy and curious Rome very likely asked what occasion the Cæsar had for the presence of an eminent jurist? The Greek companions they could easily account for, since Tiberius had always dabbled in literature; and the Chaldæans excited no surprise, for, ever since his long exile in Rhodes, he had been an anxious inquirer into his own future, as well as that of men whom he feared or hated. Tiberius had often expressed an intention of visiting the provinces: galleys had been kept in readiness to convey him to Gaul or to the east: but he never carried out his purpose, and his indecision had become a by-word in Rome. His lingering in Campania, accordingly, and his seclusion in Capri, perplexed the senate and the people with wonder and fear.

For the fear there was good cause. Although he withdrew from the publicity of Rome and its tedious ceremonies, at all times repugnant to him, Tiberius did not retire from the business of the State. Far from doing so, the decrees and letters issued by him from the island, so far as we are acquainted with them, appear to have been among the worst samples of his jealousy and hatred of the senate. Tacitus and other historians lead us to impute to Sejanus the suggestions which excited the Cæsar to a long and uniform series of cruelties. And now it is plain why he took an

expert lawyer with him. Tiberius was in matters of form a pedant; and therefore to advise him in criminal prosecutions, and to draw up death-warrants or sentences of exile with legal precision, the presence of Cocceius Nerva was necessary. He, in fact, was a kind of "Secretary of the Hanging and Heading Department."

In the imperfect fifth and in the sixth book of the 'Annals' the history of Tiberius is completed. It is little more than the chronicle of suspicions and fears, and consequently increasing cruelty. An emperor, designed by nature for great and salutary ends—some of which in the first nine years of his reign he carried out—gradually sank into a tyrant, who was at once miserable himself, and terrible to at least the higher order of his subjects. Not until after the death of Sejanus did he learn the real story of his son's death. Apicata, the widow of the fallen minister, drew up a written narrative of the poisoning of Drusus, and then, rendered desperate by the loss of her children, destroyed herself. This new revelation of the perfidy of Sejanus—the only man whom Tiberius had ever, to all appearance, really trusted—brought out all the worst qualities in his nature, perhaps maddened him, for there was insanity in the Claudian family, and more than one of his ancestors had displayed the symptoms of a disturbed, as well as a depraved mind. But the mystery which shrouds the character of this emperor will probably never be completely solved; and it would far exceed the limits, as well as be foreign to the purpose of this volume, to discuss the inconsistencies patent in the portrait drawn of him by Tacitus. The difficulty of severing truth from falsehood, rumor from record, trustworthy statements from scandalous memorials of the time, is forcibly expressed in the following words of Niebuhr:—

"The difficulties which embarrass an historical narrative of times preceding that of the writer, were for those of Tacitus really insurmountable. Tiberius had succeeded, after Germanicus had quitted Germany, in reducing the world"—we suggest that Rome and Italy would be more correct—"to a state of torpid stillness, and in overspreading it with the silence of the grave. Its history is now confined to himself and his unfortunate house, to the destruction of the victims of his tyranny and the servitude of the senate. In this dreary silence we shudder, and speak in a whisper: all is dark and wrapt in mystery, doubtful and perplexing. Was Germanicus poisoned? Was Piso guilty? What urged him to his mad violence? Did the son of Tiberius die by poison,—Agrippina by the stroke of an assassin? All this was just as uncertain to Tacitus as to us."

And the doubts which hang over this reign increase when we turn from the pages of Tacitus to those of other writers, whether contemporaries of Tiberius or of a somewhat later period. In them we shall find that the admissions in his favor which the historian makes, reluctantly fall short of rather than exceed the truth. Those who were nearest to the time have generally treated the emperor with respect or indulgence.

Nor should it be forgotten, while admitting the darkness of the narrative, and trying in vain to reconcile the inconsistencies it presents, that among the materials employed by Tacitus in the composition of the 'Annals' were, by his own confession, the 'Memoirs of the younger Agrippina, the unworthy daughter of Germanicus, the wife of the unfortunate Claudius, and the mother of the execrable Nero. The authoress of these 'Memoirs' was not likely to be just, much less lenient, to the memory of Tiberius. Her mother, the virtuous

and high-minded Agrippina—"a matron of the ancient stamp"—her two brothers, Drusus and Nero, had been sacrificed to the fears and jealousies of the Claudian Cæsar, who listened to the evil promptings of his minister Sejanus, and who was further incensed against the family of Drusus by the haughty bearing of the widow of Germanicus. The younger Agrippina had indeed wrongs to avenge; but the destruction of her near kindred was not her only motive for hostility to the name of Tiberius. Rumor had bruited abroad that her father Drusus was in heart a republican, and regarded even Augustus as a usurper. There was division in Cæsar's household. The loyal Germanicus, indeed, seems to have taken no part in it; but his wife, and the Drusi generally, viewed Tiberius as an interloper, and themselves, or at least the head of their family, as the only legitimate successors of Augustus. The hatred which the Plantagenets felt for the Tudors, the hatred which the Jacobites cherished against the house of Hanover, will afford us some measure of the feelings of the children of Drusus for the son of Livia. We no longer accept such writers as Heath and Sandford for our authorities in the case of Cromwell, nor trust Reginald Pole in forming our judgment of Henry VIII. A similar caution may fairly be exercised in the case of Tiberius, as he is exhibited by Tacitus; and, besides Agrippina's 'Memoirs,' Dean Merivale has been the first to turn attention to a very probable cause for the ill fame of Tiberius. He was, in some things, an official pedant. The reports of criminal trials, even though they contain serious charges against himself, were carefully preserved in the public Record Office, "which thus became an official repository for every calumny against the emperor which floated on the impure surface of

common conversation." There they probably remained unread until there came a time of zealous reaction against the Julian and Claudian Cæsars—the time, that is to say, of Trajan. "We cannot but suspect," continues the same great authority for 'Rome under the Cæsars,' "that this was the storehouse to which Tacitus and Suetonius, or the obscurer writers from whom they drew, resorted for the reputed details of a prince's habits whom it was the pleasure and interest of many parties to blacken to the utmost. The foulest stories current against Tiberius were probably the very charges advanced against him by libellers which he openly contradicted and denounced at the time, and which wou'd have sunk into oblivion with the mass of contemporary slander, but for the restless and suicidal jealousy with which he himself registered and labelled them in the archives of indignant justice." *

"Velleius Paterculus, indeed, and Valerius Maximus," writes Dean Merivale, whose delineation of Tiberius is a corrective of that of Tacitus on many points—"contemporaries and subjects of that emperor, must be regarded as merely courtly panegyrists: but the adulation of the one, though it jars on ears accustomed to the dignified self-respect of the earlier Romans, is not more high-flown in language and sentiment than what our own writers have addressed to the Georges, and even the Charleses and Jameses, of the English monarchy; while that of the other is chiefly offensive from the connection in which it stands with the lessons of virtue and patriotism which his book was specially designed to illustrate. The elder Seneca, the master of a school of rhetoric, to which art his

* Chapter 44.

writings are devoted, makes no mention of the emperor under whom he wrote; but his son, better known as the statesman and philosopher, speaks of him with considerable moderation, and ascribes the worst of his deeds to Sejanus and the public imformers (*delatores*) rather than to his own evil disposition. In the pages of Philo and Josephus the government of Tiberius is represented as mild and equitable: it is not until we come to Suetonius and Tacitus, in the third generation, that they are blazoned in the colors so painfully familiar to us."*

CHAPTER V.

THE 'ANNALS.'

CLAUDIUS—NERO.

CLAUDIUS, the younger brother of Germanicus, was in his fiftieth year when, after the murder of Caligula, he was unexpectedly raised to the throne. Tacitus cannot conceal his amazement that one hitherto so contemptible in the eyes of every class in Rome should have been reserved for the dignity of emperor. "Some strange caprice of fortune," he thinks, "turns all human wisdom to a jest. There was scarcely a man in Rome who did not seem, by the voice of fame and the wishes of the people, designed for the sovereign power, rather than the very person whom Fate cherished in obscurity in order to make him, at a future period, master of the Roman world."†

*Hist. of the Romans, v. ch. 46.
†Annals, iii, ch. 18.

Yet Claudius, in intention, was not among the bad Cæsars. Had he met with honest friends, and had he not been misguided by his freedmen and his wives, Messalina and the younger Agrippina, his rule might have been happy for his subjects and creditable to himself. During a reign of fourteen years—41 to 54 A.D.—he made many good and useful regulations. He was diligent, nay laborious, in public business—indeed, sometimes too much so, since he would often interfere with matters which it would have been wiser to leave in the hands of the proper and less distinguished officials. By his activity he often incurred blame; and by his awkward manners and want of tact, ridicule also. Naturally a good-humored man, he was frequently led into cruelty by bad advisers, and these advisers were his freedmen or the empresses.

The reign of Claudius has indeed often, and not improperly, been called "the reign of the Freedmen;" and as their ascendancy pervaded the times both of this Cæsar and his immediate successor, it may be well to give a slight sketch of them here.

That such a worshipper of times past, so stanch an aristocrat as Tacitus, dipped his pen in gall when delineating this order of men, is not to be wondered at. His dislike of these upstarts, as he accounted them, was, however, an echo of an old republican sentiment. Sulla's freedmen were, nearly as much as his proscriptions, the cause of the profound hatred with which the great Dictator was regarded by all except the highest aristocrats of Rome. The freedmen of Pompeius injured, by their pride and ostentation, the popularity of that general favorite of both senate and people. Yet without attempting to palliate the vices of a Polybius, a Pallas, or a Narcissus, it should be borne in mind

that in a State which can scarcely be said to have possessed a middle class at the period treated of in the 'Annals'—the balancing influence of the knights as an intermediate power between the senate and the people was a thing of the past—the employment of freedmen in State affairs was almost a necessity of the time. The nobles were too proud, when not too profligate, to be willing or wholesome counsellors of Cæsar; and even had they been better or more capable men than they were, he might have feared to draw them too near his person, inasmuch as the great families of Rome were never, at least under the Julian and Claudian emperors, Cæsar's well-wishers. Not until a *bourgeois* class of senators came in with the Flavian dynasty, was it easy to find, fit for high office, men of decent parentage or ordinary ability. The names of the freedmen show that if not Greeks by birth, they generally sprang from a Grecian stem. Unfortunately for both Cæsar and Rome, it was easy enough to meet with clever Greeks, but not with honest ones.

So long as he kept on good terms with the soldiers, an emperor had little to dread from the ambition of his freedmen, at least as regarded his own position. For neither a servile senate nor a well-fee'd prætorian cohort would have ventured to proclaim the emancipated son of a slave, Cæsar. Claudius gave scarcely more offence to the nobles by conferring on Gauls the full privileges of Roman citizens, than he did by permitting his freedman Polybius to walk in a procession between the two consuls. The odium incurred by royal favorites in modern times—the David Rizzios, the Buckinghams, and others—will enable us to form some idea of the feelings of Rome towards Pallas and Narcissus. The arrogance of these

"new men" was on a par with their wealth. An anecdote by Tacitus shows their pride and opulence. A scion of the noble house of the Scipios did not blush to move for a vote of thanks in the senate to the freedman Pallas. "'Public thanks,' said this precious representative of the first and second Africanus, 'should be given to him, for that, being a descendent from the kings of Arcadia, he deigned to forget his ancient nobility, to accept service under the State, and to be numbered among the ministers of the prince.' Claudius gravely assured the conscript fathers that Pallas was satisfied with the honor, and would still live in his former poverty. Thus a decree of the senate was engraven on brass, in which an enfranchised slave, possessing about two millions four hundred thousand pounds, was loaded with commendations for his primitive parsimony!"*

And Claudius had even worse companions than Pallas or Narcissus—the woman who intrigued with them, and traded on the weak nature of an uxorious prince. In his early days, when he was looked upon as only one degree removed from an idiot, he had always been confined within the palace walls; he had lived only with his wives—he had tried only to please them; and besides them, he had had no social intercourse, except with slaves and freedmen. Of his grandmother Livia, the wife of Augustus, he was always in terror. His ungainly figure, his thick and stammering utterance, his uncouth ways, his absence of mind, made him her abomination. He was successively the husband of the profligate Messalina and the imperious Agrippina, and each of them

* Annals, xii. ch. 53.

made him their tool. Such was the training, these were the companions, of the ill-starred brother of Germanicus.

And yet the Cæsar, whom thousands of his subjects fancied to be, what his grandmother had called him, a monster, (*portentum hominis*), was the author of a measure that was not merely salutary at the time, but also tended materially to the preservation of the empire for many generations. In 48 A.D., the Ædui (Bourgogne) addressed a petition to Cæsar, praying him to grant to their chief magistrates admission into the senate of Rome, and to such offices as led to senatorial rank. The proposal was received with some murmurs by a proud oligarchy. But Claudius supported it in a speech, still preserved on a brazen table discovered three centuries ago at Lyons. The example then set was followed by similar concessions, and Claudius preceded Vespasien in calling up to the great council of Rome men of probity as well as substance, and in pouring new blood into the veins of a decaying assembly. Nor should we forget the great public works that were executed in this reign, and which would have done honor to a better age. The Claudian acqueduct was constructed in the grand antique style of the Etruscan architects, and supplied Rome with water throughout the middle ages. The emissary or canal which brought the water of the lake Fucinus into the river Liris, a design pronounced impracticable by Augustus, was constructed and completed by Claudius. For these public services he obtained but few thanks from his contemporaries; and the pen of the historian delineates his vices and his weaknesses only, and makes no mention of the better qualities of this unhappy Cæsar. There can be no doubt that his

death was effected by poison administered to him by the last and worst of his wives, his own niece, Agrippina. Claudius she had cajoled or compelled to name for his successor her son Nero, and to supersede his own son by another wife, Britannicus. Symptoms of repentance for this unnatural act appearing in her husband, she called to her aid a noted artist in poisoning named Locusta, and the administration of her drug "was intrusted to Halotus, one of the emperor's eunuchs, whose office it was to serve up the emperor's repasts, and prove the viands by tasting them."

"In fact," continues Tacitus, "all the particulars of this transaction were soon afterwards so thoroughly known, that the writers of the times are able to account how the poison was poured into a dish of mushrooms of which he was particularly fond; but whether it was that his senses were stupefied, or from the wine he had drunk, the effect of the poison was not immediately perceived. Agrippina was dismayed; and summoned to her assistance Zenophon, a physician, whom she had already involved in her nefarious schemes. It is believed that he, as if purposing to aid Claudius in his efforts to vomit, put down his throat an envenomed feather."* Whatever was done was effective; and Claudius, who all his lifetime was scarcely considered to be a man, was in a few days pronounced, by a decree of the senate to be a god, and honored with a pompous funeral.

With some precautions, for she was not sure that the Roman people would quietly submit to the disinheriting of Britannicus, Agrippina presented her son at first to the prætorians; and when, by the promise of a

*Annals, xii. ch. 67.

donation, their assent had been secured, a decree of the senate pronounced him emperor. There was no opposition on the part of the provinces, long accustomed to accept the choice of the capital. To rule in the name of her son was Agrippina's purpose; to him she left the pleasures, for herself she reserved the toils, of government. Under this arrangement things went on smoothly for a few years, and the "Quinquennium Neronis" became in after-times a common phrase for expressing a happy and well-ordered administration.

The young Cæsar enjoyed many advantages that had been denied to his predecessor. Claudius, who had a sincere relish for research, was permitted to pursue his own studies and to write books, which have all perished, and which probably no one except himself ever read. But Nero had been carefully trained in his childhood, and there is reason to believe that his talents were naturally good, although his taste in poetry was, by unanimous consent of his contemporaries, abominable. He was an only, but not a spoilt child. His mother provided him with the best tutors she could find; and his studies were superintended by the foremost man of the age in literature, the philosopher Seneca. In one branch of learning he appears to have made little progress; and his incompetence was the more marked at the time, because ability to address an audience was an almost universal accomplishment in young Romans of rank. "Old men," says Tacitus, "who make it their recreation to compare the present and the past, took notice that Nero was the first Roman emperor who required the aid of another's eloquence." It may have been that Agrippina hoped the studies her son most delighted in—music and poetry—would always divert his attention from affairs

of State, and leave herself and her favorites free to deal with politics. In the forms and ceremonies of his high office, he was doubtless properly instructed; since, had he displayed ignorance of them, the Roman wits and scandal-mongers would not have failed to note it, and to make Rome merry at the mistakes of its Cæsar. In his "five good years" Nero indeed seems to have taken some part in business, and even to have exhibited generous instincts in his care for his people. Any dream, however, of an amiable character in Nero soon vanished; and his father's prophecy at his birth—that his and Agrippina's offspring could be nothing but a monster"—was amply fulfilled.

We can afford space for only a very brief summary of the events in a reign of fifteen years. Peaceful years they were not, like those in general of Claudius. There were disturbances in Britain: the Parthians were again in the field, though they were humbled in the end, and their king, Tiridates, was compelled to acknowledge himself a vassal of the empire. He came to Rome; he had a magnificent reception there, and took his diadem from Nero's hand. But Corbulo, a faithful and conscientious as well as brave and successful general, was ill repaid for his victories. He anticipated by self-destruction the death Nero had prepared for him.

The fire which destroyed two-thirds of the city is scarcely less familiar to English readers than the great fire of London. The Golden Palace which Nero built on the ruins of Rome is also too famous for mention; and the so-called first persecution of the Christians adds to the interest of the period.

Nero's follies seem to have caused more indignation than his vices, and his vices to have been more

resented than his crimes. The murder of his young brother (by adoption) Britannicus; of his miserable wife Octávia; of his mother Agrippina—did not seriously incense a profligate nobility or a venal people, although the latter once rose in favor of the wife, but were frightened into apathy by brutal soldiers In point of fact the vices of the Cæsars were those of the upper classes of Rome generally, but, being exhibited on a larger stage, were the more observed, because, from his high and solitary station, the criminal was more conspicuous.

Once, indeed, in the year 65 A.D., it seemed as if the tyrant had at length exhausted the patience of his subjects, and that a spark still survived of the ancient spirit of Rome. The conspiracy of which Piso was the head was formed, and had the members of it not wasted time in long delays, and had its nominal chief not been weak and vacillating, there was a fair prospect of success. The plot comprised some of the noblest and some of the most intelligent men of the time; among them the philosopher Seneca and his nephew, the poet Lucan. The consummate art of the narration, in this case, adds to the perception of our loss in the absence of Tacitus's account of the far more complex and more widely ramified conspiracy of Sejanus.

In the combination of Piso and his associates against Nero we come for the first time on the appearance of philosophers in connection with public affairs; and as Stoics especially were destined to take some prominent share in the administration of the empire, or in the imperial Council of State, nay, in the person of Marcus Aurelius to occupy the throne itself, it may be pertinent to the subject to show what view Tacitus took of men

who mingled speculative with active pursuits. Two sects of philosophers of any moment prevailed at Rome either in the time of Nero or the historian—the Stoic and Epicurean. But the latter of these so rarely appear in the 'Annals' that they may be passed over. It was otherwise with the members of the Stoic school. If not really formidable, they were the cause of great anxiety to the Cæsar's. Tacitus informs us of the interest taken by the capital, and in many of the provinces also, as to all that the Stoic Thrasea—with whose last words this portion of his works closes—was saying or doing. The journals of the day were read in all parts of the empire in order to learn what Thrasea approved or condemned. It was found that he avoided the ceremony of renewing the oath of allegiance to the Cæsar—in this case Nero—at the beginning of each year. Although one of the quindecemviral priesthood, he was never known to offer vows to the gods for the preservation of the prince. He declined to pray for his heavenly voice, as others did; and as the imperial voice was husky, it was the more disloyal to him not to petition the deities to vouchsafe its clearness. The Stoics were much given to suicide, and in their lectures and writings commended the practice of it. And so it was difficult to deal with people who, holding their own lives cheap, might be supposed to have little respect for the lives of others.

Tacitus did not hold in much esteem the doctrines of the Porch, and doubted the fitness of speculative dreamers for statesmen. Had Seneca shown himself a good adviser for his imperial pupil? Had not the pupil compelled the tutor to consent to or justify deeds which disgraced them both? Had he lifted up his voice when Britannicus was foully murdered? Had he not com-

posed the speech by which the son extenuated the still more atrocious murder of his mother? Some of these followers of Zeno he knew to be arrant knaves—hired witnesses, unscrupulous informers, hypocrites who preached virtue and practised vice under the shelter of an unkempt beard and a ragged gown. Even such as he respected he often blames for their want of common-sense. Their protests and struggles against Cæsarianism served for little else than to make it more oppressive. The rumor of a conspiracy increased a Cæsar's fears: its failure, his cruelty. The tendency of philosophers to suicide—and in readiness to poison or stab himself the Epicurean was not behind the Stoic—Tacitus thought a symptom of impatience or moral cowardice, rather than of true manliness or patriotism. When so few people were good and so many evil, why should the former hang themselves and the latter flourish like green-bay trees?

Many of the numerous anecdotes with which Tacitus enlivens his 'Annals' are, taken in connection with the more important events of the time, key-notes to Cæsarian history. The following words, addressed to Nero by a rough honest soldier, who had been engaged in Piso's conspiracy, may suffice for one among the many examples that might be given. "Asked by the emperor, what could induce him to forget the solemn obligation of his military oath, Subrius Flavius replied, 'There was a time when no soldier in your army was more devoted than I was to your service, and that as long as you deserved the esteem of mankind. I began to hate you when you were guilty of parricide; when you murdered your mother, and destroyed your wife; when you became a charioteer and

an incendiary.'" * It is evident from this strange juxtaposition of folly with crime that Nero's degradation of his high office weighed in public opinion fully as much as any of the darker deeds which have rendered his name infamous forever.

The reader's attention is now called to passages in the 'Annals' which may fairly be denominated Episodical, and in which their author displays his masterly skill as a painter in words. He avails himself of every opportunity for such digressions. Weary, apparently, of the crimes, the follies, the caprices, and prodigality of the Cæsars and the capital, he gladly leaves Rome and Italy for a while behind him, and welcomes a change of scene, even as the traveler in a thirsty land welcomes the green spots and the water-springs which relieve the tediousness of his way.

"Whenever Tacitus indulges himself in those beautiful episodes, in which he relates some domestic transactions of the Germans or the Parthians, his principal object is to relieve the attention of the reader from a uniform scene of vice and misery."† So wrote one who had deeply studied the works of the historian, and who followed the example he commends in many of his own most interesting chapters.

The reign of Tiberius, for example, although it lasted for twenty-three years, is far from rich in events, and, without episodical digressions, is little more than a narrative of the contest between the emperor, the Julian family, and the senate. Tiberius, after Germanicus was recalled from the Rhine, succeeded in reducing the Roman world to a state of general acquiescence in

* Annals, xv. ch. 67.

† Gibbon—Decline and Fall, ch. viii.

his rule. The provinces, to all appearances, and indeed according to the account given of them by other writers, enjoyed the benefits of a general peace; and had every reason to be content with a Cæsar who did not oppress them by capricious or over-burdensome taxation, and who, by allowing both imperial and senatorial governors to remain long, and sometimes even for life in office, delivered them from the harpies sent out at least triennally by the commonwealth. One great offence, in Tacitus's opinion, committed by Tiberius, was his politic neglect of minor disturbances abroad. He would not expend the forces of the empire upon petty wars in Africa or Gaul. He forebore to interfere with them in person; he let them either die out by exhaustion of the rebels themselves, or left them to be extinguished by his ordinary representatives, prætorian or proconsular. Tacitus, who wrote the 'History' and 'Annals' under the warlike Trajan—who not only put down revolt with his own hand, but considerably extended the boundaries of the empire—condemned the policy of Tiberius as either a culpable neglect or an inglorious timidity. But in his Dacian war, Trajan humbled an enemy who, in a few years more, might have imperiled Rome itself; and in his eastern campaigns taught the Parthians a lesson which they remembered until again invited to active measures by the decrepitude and decline of the empire itself.

Very early in the 'Annals' we are introduced to the rivals of Rome on its eastern frontier. Armenia was a constant bone of contention between the Roman and the Parthian monarch. It had been so when consuls ruled the state; it was so under Augustus; and it was the ambition and the pride of both the eastern and the western emperor to place on the Armenian throne a

sovereign willing to be guided by them respectively. In A.D. 16, and before the Rhenish campaigns of Germanicus were finished, the oriental kingdoms, and consequently the Roman provinces adjacent to them, were thrown into commotion. The flame of discord was lighted up by the Parthians. Weary of civil broils and a disputed succession to the throne, that restless people had sued for a king at the hands of Rome, and not long after accepting, grew tired of him. Vonones, whom the Cæsar had sent them, was at first received with all demonstrations of joy. But his subjects soon began to despise him as a prince, whose education at Rome had rendered him unfit for an eastern crown. In his tastes and pursuits he was essentially a foreigner. He took no delight in horsemanship—and to be a fearless rider was, among the Parthians, one of the most indispensable of royal virtues. Not being an expert and fearless horseman, Vonones naturally disliked the sports of the chase—and this was another cause of grave offence to his people. When he made a progress in his kingdom, he did not witch the world with noble horsemanship, but lolled lazily in a litter, like some effeminate western despot. Next, the rude fare of the Parthians was not to his taste: he introduced new-fangled Italian dishes, and thus vexed the souls of his caterers and cooks. The Romans were particular in sealing up their wine-casks: and Vonones looked sharp after his cellar. This conduct was thought abominable in a crowned head, and excited the ridicule and contempt of his butlers and his people. Again, since the days of the great Cyrus, it had ever been the practice of oriental potentates to show themselves sparingly to their subjects, and even to their courtiers and ministers to be difficult of access; whereas Vono-

nes was affable to all comers, and practised at Seleucia the courtesy which he had seen Augustus display at Rome. "Virtues," says Tacitus, "new to the Parthians were new vices. Between his good and evil qualities no distinction was made: they were foreign manners, and for that reason detested." The unlucky Vonones was in a very similar position to that of our George I. and George II., whose preference for Hanoverian ways and dishes, whose undisguised yearning for their palace at Herrenhausen and its stiff and punctilious ceremonies, and whose equally manifest distaste for English cookery, rendered them very unpopular with the nation that had not very willingly invited them to the throne.

Not, however, until Nero's reign, and shortly after his accession, do the Parthian wars occupy a prominent space in the 'Annals.' Cn. Domitius Corbulo was a soldier of the ancient stamp—one "fit to stand by Cæsar and give direction." He had highly distinguished himself under Claudius in a war against a German tribe, the Chauci, and by the excellent discipline he maintained in his army—not a universal merit at the time in Roman generals, as appears in several chapters of the 'History.' In the year 54 A.D., the Parthian king, Vologeses, invaded Armenia and expelled its king, Rhadamists, who was under the protection of the Roman Cæsar. The war, with sundry intervals of truce, lasted for nine years, but, in despite of much thwarting by Nero or his advisers, Corbulo was uniformly successful, and secured and strengthened the eastern frontier for several years to come. "Corbulo," says Tacitus, "was in high favor with the princes of the east." He possessed many qualities attractive to oriental minds. His stature was manly,

his personal dignity remarkable; his discourse magnificent—that is, having something of Asiatic pomp; his movements in the field were rapid; his combinations excited the wonder and applause of his opponents—even in their eyes he was a hero; "he united," says the historian, "with experience and consummate wisdom, those exterior accomplishments, which, though in themselves of no real value, give an air of elegance even to trifles."

The well-trained legions which Corbulo commanded in Germany did not accompany him to Armenia. There he had to construct an army before he could venture on active operations in the field:—

"He had to struggle with the slothful disposition of his legionaries more than with the perfidy of his enemies; for the legions brought out of Syria, enervated by a long peace, bore with much impatience the duties of Roman soldiers. It fully appeared that in that army there were veterans who never mounted guard, never stood sentry—men who gazed at a palisade and foss as things strange and wonderful—without helmets or breastplates—coxcombs, and only looking after gain, having served their whole time in different towns. Having, therefore, discharged such as were unfit from sickness or age, he sought to recruit his forces; and levies were made through Cappadocia and Galatia, and a legion from Germany was added. The whole army, too, was kept in tents; though such was the rigor of the winter, that the earth, which was covered with ice, would not, without digging, afford a place for their tents. Many had their limbs shriveled up by the intense cold; and some, as they stood sentry, were frozen to death. One soldier was particularly remarked, whose hands, as he carried a

bundle of wood, mortified so suddenly that, still clasping the burden, they dropped from his mutilated arms. The general himself, thinly clad, his head bare, when the troops were assembled, when employed in their works, was incessantly among them, commending the stout-hearted, comforting the feeble, and exhibiting an example to all. Shrinking from the hardship of the climate and the service, many at first deserted; but desertion was in all cases punished with death. Nor did Corbulo, as in other armies, treat with indulgence a first or second offence. That course experience proved to be salutary and preferable to mercy, inasmuch as there were fewer desertions from that camp than from those in which lenity was employed."

The result of such extreme severity shows not merely the ability of the commander, but also the sterling worth of the Roman soldier, who submitted to the conversion of a slothful into an active force, and while he suffered under it recognized the wisdom of such discipline. In reforming troops whom other generals had spoiled by indulgence, Corbulo followed the wholesome example of the conqueror of Carthage, the younger Scipio Africanus, who reorganized at Numantia a lax and disorderly army; and that of Caius Marius, who, like our Wellington in Portugal, prohibited his men from fighting until he was satisfied that they were soldiers indeed.

The pride of the Roman people had rarely been more deeply gratified than when the news arrived that the Armenian king, Tiridates, had surrendered to Corbulo, and had laid down his diadem at the foot of Nero's statue, in the camp of his conqueror and in the presence of his own nobles. The homage was the

more signal and complete because Tiridates was a brother of the Parthian monarch, and had been placed by him on the Armenian throne. A few days before, Corbulo and Tiridates had an interview in the tent of the latter, and the ceremony then observed was not unlike that which now takes place when a governor-general of India receives a native prince. The Parthian and the Roman general, each attended by twenty mounted officers, met on ground now occupied by the legions, but recently the scene of a defeat on their part. As soon as they drew near to each other, Tiridates leapt from his horse, and Corbulo returned the compliment. They then advanced on foot, and took each other by the hand. The pride of the Barbarians was flattered by the recollection of their late victory on the spot; while the triumph of Corbulo was rendered complete by the proposal of the Armenian king to accept his crown from the Cæsar's hand in Rome itself. The conference ended with an embrace.

"Then," proceeds the historian, "after an interval of a few days, the two armies met, with much pomp and circumstance on both sides. There stood the Parthian horse, ranged in troops with the standards of their several nations; here were posted the battalions of the legions, their eagles glittering, their ensigns displayed, with the images of their gods, and forming a kind of temple. A tribunal placed in the centre supported a chair of state, on which the statue of Nero rested. Tiridates approached, and having immolated the victims in due form, he lifted the diadem from his head and laid it at the foot of the statue. Every heart throbbed with intense emotion."

Tiridates seems to have been more struck by the manners of the Romans than by their military array.

Perhaps to a monarch accustomed to see myriads of horsemen in their bright chain-mail, the compact camp and the scanty cavalry of his opponents might appear comparatively poor and mean. We are told that—

"To the splendor of renown—for he was held in high esteem by the easterns—Corbulo added the graces of courtesy and the pleasures of the banquet; during which the king, as often as he observed any usage which was new to him, was frequent in his inquiries what it might mean—as that a centurion advertised the general when the watch was first set, and the company at the banquet broke up at the sound of a trumpet. Why was the fuel on the augural altar kindled by a torch? All which, Corbulo explaining in a strain of exaggeration, inspired Tiridates with admiration of the ancient institutions of the Romans."

Occasionally Tacitus indulges in what we may fairly term a romantic story. Rhadamistus, an Iberian prince, had usurped the Armenian throne, but was expelled from it by the Tiridates just mentioned, and compelled to fly for his life. "He escaped with his wife, and both owed their lives to the speed of their horses. She was far advanced in pregnancy, yet from dread of the enemy, and tenderness for her husband, she bore up at first as well as she could under the fatigue of the flight. Compelled, however, to yield to her condition, she implored him to save her by an honorable death from the reproach and misery of captivity. At first he embraced, he comforted and cheered her; now admiring her heroic spirit, now faint with dread that, if left behind, she might fall into the hands of another. At last, from excess of love, and his own familiarity with deeds of horror, he bared his scimitar, and wounded her, drew her to the

banks of the Araxes, where he committed her to the stream. He himself fled with headlong speed till he reached Iberia. Zenobia, meanwhile (for such was her name), was descried by shepherds floating on the water, still breathing, and with manifest signs of life; and as they gathered from the dignity of her aspect that she was of no mean rank, they bound up her wound and applied their rustic medicines to it; and when they had learnt her name and adventures, they conveyed her to Artaxata, whence, at the public charge, she was conducted to Tiridates, who received her courteously, and treated her with the respect due to royalty."*

This story of Zenobia in no way affects the fortunes of the empire. It throws no light on the policy or character of the Cæsars, but it affords the writer an opportunity for displaying the deep interest he took in the sorrows and sufferings of humankind.

He does not disdain to interrupt his narrative when that "miraculous bird the phœnix, after disappearing for a series of ages, revisited Egypt in the year 34 A.D." He thinks "the fact worthy of notice, and that it will not be unwelcome to the reader."

"That the phœnix is sacred to the sun, and differs from the rest of the feathered species in the form of its head, and the tincture of its plumage, are points settled by naturalists. Of its longevity the accounts are various. The common persuasion is, that it lives five hundred years, though by some writers the period is extended to fourteen hundred and sixty-one. . . . It is the disposition of the phœnix, when its course of years is finished, and the approach of death is

* Annals, xii. ch. 51.

felt, to build a nest in its native clime, and there deposit the principles of life, from which a new progeny arises. The first care of the young bird, as soon as fledged and able to trust to its wings, is to perform the obsequies of his father. But this duty is not undertaken rashly. He collects a quantity of myrrh, and, to try its strength, makes frequent excursions with a load on its back. When he has made this experiment through a long tract of air and gained confidence in his own vigor, he takes up the body of his father, and flies with it to the altar of the sun, where he leaves it to be consumed in flames of fragrance. Such is the account of this extraordinary bird. It has, no doubt, a mixture of fable; but that the phœnix, from time to time, appears in Egypt, seems to be a fact sufficiently ascertained." *

We pass on to the 'History.' Inferior to them in some respects, and far more imperfect than the 'Annals,' the earlier-written work rests on better authority than the latter. The 'History,' indeed, is a narrative akin to that of Livy and Roman historians in general; whereas the 'Annals' are conceived in a modern spirit, and are the model on which many subsequent writers have constructed their works.

* Annals, vi. ch. 28.

CHAPTER VI.

'HISTORY.'

GALBA—OTHO.

WHETHER the year 51 or 54 A.D. be accepted as the birth-day of Tacitus, he was old enough, in either case, to have been able to watch and to retain a lively recollection of the great convulsion of the empire which followed Nero's death. If born in the latter of these years he was nearly sixteen, if in the earlier he was nearly eighteen: and with the sixteenth year commenced the manhood of a Roman; and at eighteen we have already seen that Pliny had put on a lawyer's gown. The 'History' may accordingly be accounted the work of one having good opportunities for observation himself, and for making inquiry from others.

The 'History,' when perfect, extended from the arrival of Galba in Rome, on the 1st of January, 69 A.D., to the murder of Domitian in 96. If the books which are unfortunately lost bore any proportion to those extant, then we may fairly put down the number of them as thirty at the least. Unfortunately we possess only four books and the beginning of the fifth, and these comprise, and that not entirely, the events of those troubled years 69 and 70. The second chapter is a prologue to a tragic drama of the deepest dye, and prepares us for scenes of crime and calamity following one another in rapid succession.

"I am entering," writes Tacitus, "on the history of a period rich in disasters, frightful in its wars, torn by civil strife, and even in peace full of horrors. Four emperors perished by the sword. There were three civil wars; there were more with foreign enemies:

there were often wars that had both characters at once. Now, too, Italy was prostrated by disasters either entirely novel, or that recurred only after a long succession of ages. Cities in Campania's richest plains were swallowed up and overwhelmed—Rome wasted by conflagrations, its oldest temples consumed, and the Capitol itself fired by the hands of citizens. Never, surely, did more terrible calamities of the Roman people, or evidence more conclusive, prove that the gods take no thought for our happiness, but only for our punishment."

In the election of a Cæsar the senate might effect to confirm the choice of the soldiers; but it was the soldiers, or at least the terror of them, who really invested with the purple robe Servius Galba. He was chosen by the Spanish legions, to whom the example had been set by those of Gaul, who had put forward as Nero's successor Vindex and Virginius Rufus. The one perished in the attempt to become Cæsar; the other, with courageous moderation, refused to be placed on that proud but perilous eminence. In their selection of Galba the soldiers to all appearance did wisely and well, for he had passed through many grades of both military and civil offices with much credit to himself. He reigned long enough and unfortunately enough to merit the description—it has become almost proverbial—that had he never been emperor no one would have doubted his capacity for empire.

He came to the throne under almost every possible disadvantage. He was old, he was ugly, bald-headed, and a gouty invalid. He kept his purse-strings tight: he spoke his mind indiscreetly: he was a slave to his freedmen and favorites: good in intention, he was infirm of purpose: a proper and humane provin-

cial governor, he caused much blood to be spilt in Rome, not because he was cruel, but through weakness, indecision, or mere perplexity.

He came to a city peopled by his foes. The prætorians could not stomach a Cæsar chosen by the legions: they could not conceal from themselves that the fatal secret was revealed, and indeed was pervading the provinces—that a "prince might be created elsewhere than at Rome." Highly had Nero favored—nay, even flattered—his body-guards. They were the props of his throne: their tribunes, and even their centurions, were admitted to his orgies: they stood beside him in the courts of justice: they accompanied him on his journeys: he enriched them, when his own coffers were empty, with the spoils of noble houses: he relaxed their discipline: he catered for their pleasures: they led the applause when he drove his chariot in the circus, or sang and spouted in the theatre. And now a Cæsar was in their darling's place who knew not the prætorians—who had filled the capital with the ordinary legionaries, whom they had always affected to despise as the "Line." The treasury was known to be empty: the Cæsar was said to be avaricious. "He loved no plays;" he was not musical; nothing was to be expected, much to be dreaded from, this septuagenarian and worn-out martinet.

The populace were not less hostile to Galba. Next to the prætorians, they were the late emperor's warmest supporters. He was ever giving them good dinners and shows and spectacles: he did not keep himself shut up in the recesses of the palace: his hand was heavy on the senators, and the senators they hated: but he was the king of the people; and, being so, what mattered it to them if he had put to death his adoptive brother

Britannicus, or that termagant his mother Agrippina, even if she were a daughter of their once much-loved Germanicus?

Nero's freedmen, again, were among Galba's foes. They indeed had been making hay while the sun shone; they had "soaked up the Cæsar's countenance, his rewards, his authorities." Now evil days had come: inquiries were being made into the modes by which they had become rich--demands were being issued for restitution of their gains. Galba needed what they had gleaned; and it was "but squeezing them and, sponges, you will be dry again." The inquiries and demands were alike vain, for the sponges were already dry; they had squandered abroad all that they had nefariously gotten. If Galba had any friends, they were in his own army, or in the senate. But, by an indiscreet though honest declaration that he was wont to "choose his soldiers, not to buy them," he had also disappointed and estranged his own partisans. To rely on the senate was to lean on a broken reed. The senatorial chiefs were none of them men of bold aspirations or vigorous resolutions.

Ill luck dogged the heels of Galba even before he reached Italy. The perfect of the prætorians, Nymphidius Sabinus, who had taken an active part in Nero's overthrow, had met his successor at Narbonne (Narbo), and, with many compliments, tendered him allegiance, accompanied with a modest request to have one of the highest offices in the state conferred on himself. The ground, however, was preoccupied by Galba's adherents, who, not unnaturally, claimed place and priority in his favors. The prefect, deeply offended by such refusal, hurried back to Rome, and tried to persuade the body-guard to proclaim him, Cæsar. This was too

strong a measure even for the dissatisfied soldiery, and Nymphidius was slaughtered in the Prætorian camp. But Galba, or his counsellors, pushed success too far by demanding the sacrifice of all Nymphidius's supporters who had not already destroyed themselves, and by putting to death a man of consular rank, Petronius Turpilianus, whom Nero had appointed to the command of his guards, and who was now condemned without even the formality of a trial. Such informal execution of "persons of quality" would have touched lightly an army or a populace already familiar with irregular sentences and short shrift. But Galba increased his evil repute as a man of blood when, on arriving at the Milvian Bridge in Rome, he ordered his soldiers to mow down Nero's marine battalions—they had troubled him with premature importunities — and over whose killed and wounded bodies he entered the capital.

Galba was not ambitious of empire. He had refused to accept the throne when offered him by the army on the death of Caligula; he had served Claudius faithfully as governor of Africa. The already aged veteran was prudently living in retirement, when Nero appointed him to be his legate in Spain, and for eight years he governed that province with great ability. But he was in the hands of evil ministers, and resigned himself entirely to them, and these ministers were at variance with one another; on one point alone did they agree —that at Galba's age some provision ought to be promptly made for a successor. But their harmony extended only to the general principle that Galba could not live much longer, and that there was already a formidable rival in the field.

We not unfrequently meet with persons in history whose characters it is scarcely possible to draw cor-

rectly—persons who disappoint our hopes, and exceed our expectations of them. Of this class of men was Marcus Salvius Otho. Among the most profligate of Nero's companions, the Rochester of his Court, he governed the province of Lusitania for several years with much credit to himself; the most luxurious and depraved of men while prosperous, his end was that of a hardy though unfortunate soldier. Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it—he died by his own hand, an Epicurean Cato; even as Rochester, if Bishop Burnet may be trusted, departed a good Christian. It is, however, to Galba's credit that he declined following the interested advice of his ministers in the appointment of a successor. "He was actuated," Tacitus thinks, "by concern for the State, and saw that the sovereign power was wrested out of Nero's hands in vain, if it were to be transferred to Otho—a duplicate of him. In the choice of a colleague Galba appears for once to have judged for himself; and his selection, though it proved unfortunate, cannot justly be found fault with. Piso Licinianus came of an illustrious family on both sides. By the better sort in Rome he was respected, if not beloved; but his aspect and deportment savored too much of the strictness of a primitive age. By the profligate and the frivolous he was called morose and sullen. This appointment necessarily crushed the hopes and aroused the wrath of Otho, who now began to intrigue in earnest against Galba.

All this time a storm was brewing in the north far more dangerous to the emperor, and far more disastrous to Rome and Italy, than Otho's plot. The very day on which Galba put on the consular robe—January 1, 69, A.D.—the legions of Upper Germany,

when summoned to take the military oath to that emperor, tore down his images, demanded that the oath should run in the name of the senate and people, and that some other successor to Nero should be appointed. Aulus Vitellius had recently been sent by Galba as consular legate to Lower Germany, and on the very next day after this mutiny broke out, he was greeted in the camp at Cologne by the legions of Germany, or their delegates, as Imperator.

The news of this movement in Germany hurried on the adoption. It was conferred with dignity by Galba, it was received with becoming modesty and reverence by Piso, and with plausible and perhaps sincere expressions of his desire to fulfil the important duties imposed on him. Galba conducted him to the prætorian camp, but as he did not promise a donative, his speech to the soldiers aggravated his former unpopularity. The way was now prepared for Otho. To the disappointed guards a notorious prodigal was far more welcome than a frugal emperor. On the morning of the 15th of January, Galba was present at a sacrifice, and Otho in attendance on him. The entrails of the victims betokened risk to the emperor —"in his own household there lurked a foe." That foe, it had been prearranged, was summoned by a freedman to keep an appointment with a surveyor of works. With this excuse he quitted the emperor's presence and hurried to the place of tryst already agreed on—the Golden Milestone beneath the Capitol in front of the Roman Forum. It may have been by chance, it may have been by design, to prevent premature alarm in the city, that only three-and-twenty common soldiers there saluted Otho as "emperor." Certainly he had expected more, since, dismayed at

the thin attendance, he seems for a moment to have wavered in his purpose. But his partisans, better informed, drew their swords, thrust him into a litter, and bore him off to the prætorian camp.

Arrived at the camp, the commander on that day—one Julius Martialis, a tribune—it is uncertain whether he were an accomplice, or merely alarmed at so unlooked-for a visit—opened the gates, and admitted the pretender into the enclosure. There the other tribunes and centurions, regarding their own safety alone, and perhaps sharing in the delusion of Martialis—that this feeble body of traitors to Galba was but an advanced guard of numerous and powerful conspirators—forgot at once their duty and their military oath, and joined in, or at least connived at, an enterprise of whose aim they were still uncertain, and of the existence of which they had been ignorant a few minutes before. In fact, the privates alone seem to have been in the secret; but, as had often happened, and was often to happen again, they were too powerful for their officers. The condensed phrase of the historian alone conveys the pith and marrow of the plot. "Two common soldiers" (*mānipulares*) "engaged to transfer the empire of the Roman people—and they *did* transfer it."

Otho meanwhile had brought the imperial guards. He attended at Galba's supper-table, gave handsome presents to the cohort on duty, and consoled the disappointed among the soldiers with gifts of land or money. The unconscious emperor, busy with his sacrifice, was really importuning the gods of an empire that was now another's. Piso harangued the troops: but the appeal of a stoical Cæsar was addressed to deaf ears: the greater number of his hearers at once dis-

persed; the few who remaind faithful to the two Cæsars were feeble or wavering; the populace and the slaves clamored with discordant shouts for Otho's death and the destruction of the conspirators. But what could a few domestic servants, a few frightened knights and senators, and an unarmed rabble, do against the prætorians, now advancing on the city? It was to little purpose that Galba's friends stood by him when he himself was undecided, when his ministers were wrangling with each other, and when every moment brought the conspirators nearer. The murder of Galba can only be described in the words of Tacitus —at least in those of his ablest English translations.*

"Galba was hurried to and fro with every movement of the surging crowd;" the feeble old man, attended by only one half-armed cohort, had come down from the Palatine hill to the Forum; "the halls and temples all around were thronged with spectators of this mournful sight. Not a voice was heard from the better class of people or even from the rabble. Everywhere were terror-stricken countenances, and ears turned to catch every sound. It was a scene neither of agitation nor of repose, but there reigned the silence of profound alarm and profound indignation. Otho, however, was told that they were arming the mob. He ordered his men to hurry on at full speed and to anticipate the danger. Then did Roman soldiers rush forward like men who had to drive a Vologeses or Pacorus from the ancestral throne of the Arsacidæ, not as though they were hastening to murder their aged and defenceless emperor. In all the terror of their arms, and at the full speed of their horses, they burst into the

* Church and Brodribb.

Forum, thrusting aside the crowd and trampling on the senate. Neither the sight of the Capitol, nor the sanctity of the overhanging temples, could deter them from committing a crime which any one succeeding to power must avenge."

"When this armed array was seen to approach, the standard-bearer of the cohort that escorted Galba tore off and dashed upon the ground Galba's effigy. At this signal the feeling of all the troops declared itself plainly for Otho. The Forum was deserted by the flying populace. Weapons were pointed against all who hesitated. Near the lake of Curtius, Galba was thrown out of his litter and fell to the ground, through the alarm of his bearers. His last words have been variously reported, according as men hated or admired him. Some have said that he asked in a tone of entreaty what wrong he had done, and begged a few days for the payment of the donative. The more general account is, that he voluntarily offered his neck to the murderers, and bade them haste and strike, if it seemed to be for the good of the commonwealth. To those who slew him it mattered not what he said. About the actual murderer nothing is clearly known. The soldiers foully mutilated his arms and legs, for his breast was protected, and in their savage ferocity inflicted many wounds even on the headless trunk."

It will not be necessary to dwell long on the remainder of Otho's story, since he did little memorable during his short reign until the last moments of his life. "Uneasy lay the head that wore the crown." The last rites to Galba were scarcely paid; the acclamations that greeted Otho both in the senate and the camp were still ringing in all ears, when he found that he had reason to tremble. "From the moment," says

Dean Merivale, "that he stepped through an emperor's blood into the palace of the Cæsars, Otho was made aware that he in his turn must fight if he would retain his newly acquired honors." In swift succession, messengers followed one another, bringing him tidings of the progress of sedition in Gaul, and of the formidable attitude assumed by Vitellius at the head of the armies on the Rhine.

And who was this third candidate for the purple? Had it been worth while to murder Galba in order that Otho might succeed? Would it be worth the expense of more blood and treasure to despatch Otho, and replace him by a rival of whom no good report had ever reached the capital? Dear as Nero by his vices and cruelties had cost the senate and the people, and one or two of the provinces, yet at present the empire appeared to have lost rather than gained by his removal. It was bad for a score or two of statesmen and generals to perish yearly by the executioner's hands, or by suicide—that common refuge of despair; but it was worse for thousands to be mown down by the swords of infuriated soldiers in a few weeks or even a few days. Aulus Vitellius, indeed, was not utterly evil. He was not wholly abandoned to the vices and pleasures of the city. He had gained for himself some reputation in letters and in eloquence; he had served with great credit for uprightness as proconsul and legate in Africa. On his march from the Rhine he displayed some generosity in saving unpopular officers from the fury of the legions, among them Virginius Rufus; and some modesty in at first deferring to accept the title of Augustus, and positively refusing that of Cæsar. His mother and his wife also helped to invest him with some vicarious merit. Both these matrons

were examples of moderation in prosperity. **Sextilia,** like Cromwell's mother, looked with fear and distrust on her son's elevation, refused all public honors herself, and replied to the first letter he addressed to her under his new title of Germanicus that *her* son was named Vitellius, and she knew of no other. This high-minded woman died shortly after his accession, seems to have been spared the spectacle of his gross and vulgar excesses, and certainly did not witness his shameful end. His wife, Galeria, bore herself as the spouse of a simple senator, and humanely protected the children of Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's brother, from the daggers of the Vitellians. Like Galba, too, Viteillius committed no crime in aspiring to the throne; it was forced upon him by the tribunes and centurions at Cologne.

It is pleasant to encounter virtuous women in the annals of a period soiled by the names of a Poppæa, a Messalina and an Agrippina; we have therefore given a passing notice of the wife and mother of Vitellius. Of himself there is nothing more to be said on the score of virtue. "Tacitus," says Gibbon, "fairly calls him a hog," and in truth he was a most valiant trencherman. As soon as, perhaps even before, his arrangements were completed for despatching his legions from the Rhine to the Tiber, he appears to have thought that the highest privilege he had attained by his sudden promotion was that of keeping the most expensive table ever known in Roman annals. But Vitelius allowed not a day to pass unsignalized by the pomp and circumstances of his dinner. During his whole progress from Cologne to Italy—it was necessarily a slow one, since he needed many hours for refreshment and digestion—the lands through which he passed were ransacked, the rivers and the seas

were swept, for delicacies for his table. "The leading men of the various States were ruined by having to furnish his entertainments, and the States themselves reduced to beggary." Such a commander could neither be respected nor enforce discipline. The Gauls suffered severely, but not so much as Italy, from the presence of the Vitellians. The evils of war are terrible, but not so terrible, says the historian, as was the march of the German legions. "The soldiers, dispersed through the municipal towns and colonies, were robbing and plundering and polluting every place with violence and lust. Everything lawful or unlawful, they were ready to seize or to sell, sparing nothing, sacred or profane. Some persons under the soldiers' garb murdered their private enemies. The soldiers themselves, who knew the country well, marked out rich estates and wealthy owners for plunder, or for death in case of resistance; their commanders were in their power, and dared not check them."

Otho did not answer the expectations of his partisans in Rome. He was no longer the Otho of the Neronian time. He deferred his pleasures to a more convenient season: he moulded his new life to accord with the duties and dignity of his new position. Yet he got little credit by the change, for men not unnaturally thought that his virtues were a mask for the moment, and that, if he returned victorious, his vices would revive. Perhaps they were wrong in their apprehensions. No indolence or riot disgraced Otho's march. "He wore a cuirass of iron, and was to be seen in front of the standards, on foot, rough and negligent in dress, and utterly unlike what common report had pictured him." In a few preliminary skirmishes the fortunes of the Othonian and Vitellian armies were

pretty evenly balanced. But the emperor had hurried into the field with very insufficient forces; he seems, indeed, from the first to have despaired of the issue. His excesses in early life had enfeebled, not his courage but his power of will. He had indecently exulted when the head of Piso was shown to him, but the spectre of Galba is said to have haunted him in the solitude of the night after the murder. Within twenty hours after his usurpation, he began to presage his own fall. In one thing he did not share the vices of Nero; he thirsted not for blood, for those whom he put to death were victims to the wrath of the prætorians or of the populace.

And so, indifferent to life and desponding of success, Otho went forth to do battle for his throne without awaiting the legions which had declared for him in Pannonia, Dalmatia, and Mæsia. The prætorian guards were the kernel of his forces, but they were more than overmatched by the Vitellian legions trained in the German wars. The guards were indeed corrupted by the luxuries of Rome, and regardless of discipline. Like many French regiments in 1870, they elected their own officers, and obeyed or disobeyed them as they pleased. Spies, too, from the camp of the Vitellians, had found their way into Rome, and whispered to many who resented Galba's murder, that if his destroyer were slain or deposed, there would be another donative from his conqueror.

The battle which decided Otho's fate was fought at Bedriacum, a small town or hamlet situated between Verona and Cremona. At first fortune seemed to smile on the Othonians; a successful charge on their part broke the enemy's line, and one of his eagles was taken by them. But this, so far from discouraging, infuria-

ted the Vitellians, and determined victory in their favor. Cæcina and Valens, their commanders, proved themselves valiant and able officers, whereas Otho's generals early quitted the field. The slaughter was dreadful. "In civil wars," says Tacitus, "no prisoners are reserved for sale." The Vitellians were not merely better led and disciplined, but their reserves were large, and any chance of retrieving defeat by a second combat was made vain by the insubordination of the vanquished, who laid all the blame of discomfiture on their commanders, and threatened them with death.

Otho was not present in the action. His soldiers demanded, his two best officers advised, him to remain with the legions, or to defer a battle. They urged that fortune, the gods, and the genius (the guardian angel of pagan belief) of Otho must be crowned by victory. "The day" on which their counsel was accepted "first gave the death-blow to the Othonian cause."

Otho, now at Brocello (Brixellum), a few miles distant from Bedriacum, was awaiting without fear or drooping spirit—for his mind, in case of reverse, had long been made up—the report of the battle. Vague and discordant rumors at first reached his ear. But at last increasing troops of fugitives brought sure intelligence that all was lost. The soldiers who had accompanied him, without waiting to hear his opinion, exhorted him not to despair, but to try again the "fortune of the die." They themselves were ready to brave every danger; there were forces still in reserve; the Mæsian and Pannonian legions would join them in a few days. Flattery, they said, had done its worst in urging him to leave the army, in hurrying on the unfortunate engagement. But it was not the voice of

flatterers that now implored him to take heart, and to lead them against the enemy. The soldiers who were near him fell at his feet and clasped his knees; those at a distance stretched forth their hands in token of assent. Plotius Firmus, who commanded a detachment of the body-guard, joined his prayers to those of the legions. "The noble mind," he said, "battles with adversity; it is the craven spirit that capitulates at once. Your soldiers, Cæsar, have undergone much, yet do not despond: abandon not an army devoted to your cause; renounce not men as generous as they are brave."

They spoke to deaf ears. Otho had weighed all circumstances; the end was at hand; ambition in him was dead; he had been dazzled by the purple and its gold trappings; they had brought him only anxious days and sleepless nights; he had reveled with Nero; he had enjoyed some repose in his Lusitanian province; he had helped Galba to a throne; he had hurled him from it. He had shed blood enough already, he had tasted the extremes of luxury and "fierce civil strife," and all was vanity. He addressed to his faithful guards some words of gratitude, but he left none of his hearers in doubt as to his fixed purpose to have done with wars and with life—presently and forever.

From the soldiers he turned to his weeping friends. Calm and untroubled himself, with a serene countenance, with a firm voice, he besought them to be calm and resigned. He advised all to quit the town without loss of time, and to make their terms with the conqueror. For all who were willing to depart he provided boats and carriages. From his papers and letters he selected all such as might, under a new Cæsar, be injurious to the writers of them—all that expressed duty

towards himself or ill-will to Vitellius—and committed them to the flames. "For the general good," he said, "I am a willing victim. For myself, I have won ample renown, and I leave to my family an illustrious name." Towards the close of day he called for cold water, and having quenched his thirst, ordered two daggers to be brought him. He tried the points of both, and laid one of them under his pillow. Once more assuring himself that all who wished had left the town, he passed the night in quiet. At the dawn of day, he stabbed himself through the heart. One wound sufficed, but his dying groans caught the ears of his freedmen and slaves. They rushed into his chamber, and among them Plotius Firmus. In compliance with his earnest request, his body was burnt without delay. The ghastly spectacle of Galba's and Piso's heads fixed on lances and exhibited to a brutal soldiery and populace was doubtless present to his mind when ordering this speedy passage to the funeral pyre. His corpse was borne to it by the prætorians "with praises and tears, covering his wound and his hands with kisses." Some killed themselves near the pyre—"not moved," says Tacitus, "by remorse or by fear, but by the desire to emulate his glory, and by love of their prince." "Over his ashes was built a tomb, unpretending, and therefore likely to stand." He ended his life in the thirty-seventh year of his age, and had reigned just three months. Rarely, if ever, does history present an example of swifter retribution for treachery and treason.

The Vitellian generals moved in three divisions. Valens advanced through Gaul, and so by the Mont Genèvre into Italy; Cæcina through the eastern cantons of Switzerland, and over the Great St. Bernard;

while Vitellius followed more leisurely in the rear of his legates. Every district through which they respectively passed was ravaged; villages, and sometimes large towns, were sacked or burnt; but the richer land south of the Alps was the principal sufferer. The soldiers of Otho, it was said, had exhausted Italy, but it was desolated by the Vitellians. The fierce warriors of the north, Romans only in name, fell without remorse on the borough-towns and colonies, and, as it were, rehearsed on their march the license they hoped to indulge in at Rome. From Pavia Vitellius proceeded to Cremona, and thence diverged from his route to cross the plain of Bedriacum, in order to behold the scene of the recent victory. The aspect of the field of battle, and the brutality of the victor, are thus described by Tacitus:—

"It was a hideous and a horrible sight. Not forty days had passed since the battle, and there lay mangled corpses, severed limbs, the putrefying forms of men and horses. The soil was saturated with gore; and, what with leveled trees and crops, horrible was the desolation. Not less revolting was that portion of the road which the people of Cremona had strown with laurel-leaves and roses, and on which they had raised altars, and sacrificed victims, as if to greet some barbarous despot—festivities in which they delighted for the moment, but which were afterwards to work their ruin. Valens and Cæcina were present, and pointed out the various localities of the field of battle, showing how from one point the columns of the legions had rushed to the attack; how from another the cavalry had charged; how from a third the auxiliary troops had turned the flank of the enemy. The tribunes and prefects extolled their individual achievements, and

mixed together fictions, facts, and exaggerations. The common soldiers also turned aside from the line of march with joyful shouts, recognized the various scenes of conflict, and gazed with wonder on the piles of weapons and the heaps of slain. Some indeed there were whom all this moved to thoughts of the mutability of fortune, to pity and to tears. Vitellius did not turn away his eyes—did not shudder to behold the unburied corpses of so many thousands of his countrymen; nay, in his exultation, in his ignorance of the doom which was so close upon himself, he actually instituted a religious ceremony in honor of the tutelary gods of the place."

It was said that Vitellius expressed a brutal pleasure at the spectacle. He called for bowls of wine—he circulated them freely among his suite and soldiers—he declared that "the corpse of an enemy smells always well, particularly that of a fellow-citizen." We will now leave him in Rome, where he was of course greeted by the shouts of the populace, the flattery of the upper classes, and innumerable applications for places and favors. Well had Tiberius said of his Roman subjects, that they were "born to be slaves."

CHAPTER VII.

'HISTORY.'

VITELLIUS.

THE legions in Syria and Egypt had taken the oath to Galba and Otho without a murmur, but when required for the third time within a few weeks to transfer their allegiance to an enemy of both those Cæsars, they hesitated for a while and then obeyed with an ill grace. Between the armies of the northern and eastern provinces there had long been jealousies and rivalry, and the choice of Vitellius by the German, excited angry feelings in the Syrian camps. They were not less numerous, they were better disciplined and disposed, they had been very recently winning new laurels in the north of Palestine; why should they not put forward their claim to appoint a Cæsar as well as the lazy and over-paid prætorians, or the mutinous legions of the Rhine? In one very important respect, indeed, they were better situated than either the body guards or the Rhenish divisions. Neither Otho nor Vitellius could be termed a happy choice, unless to be a notorious profligate or an unsurpassed glutton were a recommendation for empire. They, at least at Antioch and in Galilee, had two leaders of mark and likelihood, who had already proved their fitness to rule by their obedience and ability in lower stations.

The characters of these very capable leaders are thus drawn in a few strokes by Tacitus:—

"Syria and its four legions were under the command of Lucinius Mucianus, a man whose good and bad fortune was equally famous. In his youth he had

cultivated with many intrigues the friendship of the great. His resources soon failed, and his position became precarious, and as he also suspected that Claudius had taken some offence, he withdrew into a retired part of Asia [Minor], and was as like an exile as he was afterwards like an emperor. He was a compound of dissipation and energy, of arrogance and courtesy, of good and bad qualities. His self-indulgence was excessive when he had leisure, yet whenever he had served he had shown great qualities. In his public capacity he might be praised; his private life was in bad repute. Yet, over subjects, friends and colleagues he exercised the influence of many fascinations. He was a man who would find it easier to transfer the imperial power to another than to hold it for himself. He was eminent for his magnificence, for his wealth, and for a greatness that transcended in all respects the condition of a subject. Readier of speech than Vespasian, he thoroughly understood the arrangement and direction of civil business."*

"Vespasian was an energetic soldier. He could march at the head of his army, choose the place for his camp, and bring by night and day his skill, or, if the occasion required, his personal courage, to oppose the foe. His food was such as chance offered; his dress and appearance hardly distinguished him from the common soldier; in short, but for his avarice, he was equal to the generals of old."

The Cæsar, "for whom fortune was now preparing, in a distant part of the world, the origin and rise of a new dynasty," had no illustrious images in the hall of his fathers. His family belonged to the Sabine

* Hist., i. 10; ii. 5.

burgh of Reatè, and had never risen to public honors, but he himself had seen much service. Nero's freedman and favorite, Narcissus, appointed him to the command of a legion in Britain, where he highly distinguished himself and earned triumphal ornaments. He was one of the consuls in the year 51 A.D. But those whom Narcissus promoted became the subject of the younger Agrippina's aversion, and not until after her fall did Vespasian obtain any further employment. In 52 he was proconsul of Africa, and, strange to tell, he left the province poorer than he came to it—a fact scarcely reconcilable with Tacitus's imputation of "avarice." He was not only an unready speaker, but also an indifferent courtier, and got into disgrace with Nero for going to sleep while the Cæsar was singing and playing before a delighted—or perchance a disgusted—audience of Corinthians, Olympians, or the fastidious men of Athens. Such behavior was too much for Nero's patience, and the tasteless Vespasian was ordered to begone and take his impertinent naps in his own house. But when serious disturbances arose in Judæa, he was too good an officer to be overlooked, and was appointed to the government of Palestine, and to the command of the forces there, or to be sent thither, at the close of 66 A.D. At the time of this promotion he was in his sixty-first year.

Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by Tiberius Alexandria, the prefect of Egypt, and it may be inferred without his own knowledge or consent at the moment. Long he pondered on the proposal even while surrounded by his own officers and men. It was, in fact, a very serious matter to be hailed "Imperator." Within a few months three Cæsar's had perished—Nero by the hand of a slave, Galba by the

swords of the prætorians, and Otho by his own dagger. The supplications of the army, and the urgency of Mucianus—they had been on bad terms, but were now reconciled—overcame his scruples, and he confirmed the choice of the prefect of Egypt by accepting the purple from the Syrian legionaries. An intensely practical man when not at a concert or a play, he instantly took measures for establishing his claim, but he did not hurry to Italy, although the eyes of all its better men had long been turned to Palestine. The forces of the east were divided into three portions. Of these, one was deemed sufficient to encounter the Vitellians: a second was retained in the east, to continue, under Titus, the Judæan war; to watch the Armenian and Parthian border was the task of the third. The revolt against Vitellius was making rapid strides: some provinces remained neutral; others, Britain and the Rhenish, could not afford to part with a cohort, and the emperor at Rome squandered in vulgar and brutal sensuality the money he needed for the payment of his troops.

The march of the Vespasians did not materially differ from that of the Vitellians. Again Italy north of the Po was ravaged, and once more on the field of Bedriacum an empire was lost and won. But among the leaders of the eastern army was one who by his energy and enterprise relieves the uniformity of the narrative. In Antonius Primus we find a Paladin; a Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, the hero of the Succession War in Spain. At the head of three legions he seized the passes of the Julian Alps. Far inferior to the enemy in strength, his officers advised him to await the arrival of Mucianus. But delay suited not the eager spirit of Antonius, who, moreover, was resolved to win the victory alone. Twice he

restored the fortune of the day at Bedriacum; and after a brave defence by the Vitellians, he broke through their camp before the walls of Cremona, and received the keys of that proverbially unfortunate city. From that moment the fate of Vitellius himself was decided.

The city had surrendered under a promise of protection, but Antonius did not, perhaps could not, keep his word. As yet he had not rewarded his soldiers with booty or license. It is said that when taking a bath after the fatigues of the assault, he had complained of the water not being warm enough. "It soon shall be hotter," said an attendant; and his words were caught up by the soldiers as if they were a signal for burning the town. In a few hours one of the most beautiful of Cisalpine cities was reduced to ashes.

Vitellius, content with sending to the seat of war Cæcina and Fabius Valens, abandoned himself to his wonted coarse indulgences; he neither attended to his soldiers nor showed himself to the people. "Buried in the shades of his gardens, among the woods of La Riccia [Aricia], like those sluggish animals which, if you supply them with food, lie motionless and torpid, he had dismissed with the same forgetfulness the past, the present, and the future." For cruelties, indeed, he found leisure occasionally. He was startled by tidings of revolt and disaffection. The fleet at Ravenna had gone over to the enemy. Cæcina had made an attempt, an abortive one, to pass over to Vespasian. "In that dull soul joy was more powerful than apprehension." As soon as he learned that his own soldiers had put Cæcina in irons, he returned exulting to Rome. Before a crowded assembly of the people he applauded the obedience of the legions, and sent to prison the prefect of the prætorian guard, who,

as a friend of Cæcina, might, he thought, follow his example.

Antonius had crossed the Apennines. In the valley of the Nar the two armies once more confronted one another; but deserted by their emperor, and without leaders, the Vitellians had no spirit for fighting. They were incorporated with the Vespasians. The slothful emperor, says Tacitus, "would have forgotten that he was, or rather had been one, had not his foes reminded him of his rank." Antonius offered him terms, which were confirmed by Mucianus. His life should be spared; a quiet retreat in Campania, the garden and the vineyard of Rome, with a large income, was proposed to and accepted by him.

But Rome had yet to drink the cup of woe to the dregs. Once more, as in the civil wars of the commonwealth, the city was to be sacked and the temple of the Capitoline Jupiter to be burnt. Terms were being drawn up for a peaceful surrender of the capital and the abdication of the emperor. Flavius Sabinus, the elder brother of Vespasian, had remained during all these revolutions in Rome, and now represented him. In the temple of Apollo, on the Palatine, "the transfer of the empire was debated and settled."

But it was not accomplished so easily. Rome was filled with fugitives from the seat of war, and well aware that no mercy for them could be looked for if Antonius were once master of the city, they dinned in the ears of their sluggish chief, that for him the post of danger was a private station. Was Antonius a man to keep his word? Would legions who had shown themselves false, be true to promises or covenants? How long would he enjoy his Campanian retreat, or his ample revenues? He was compelled to return to his

palace, not indeed to resume his functions, but to await his doom. For the last time he entered the Palatine house, hardly knowing whether he were still emperor or not.

The transfer which the soldiers refused to ratify was, however, considered valid by the senate, the knights, the magistrates and police of the city, and they urged Sabinus to arm against the German cohorts, to vindicate his brother's claim to the purple, and to defend Rome, the citizens, and himself from the fury of these ruffians. Sabinus complied; but his force was small: his measures were hurried and insufficient; he was attacked and routed by the Vitellians, and compelled to take refuge in the Capitol. Some communications took place between Sabinus and Vitellius, but they were idle, for the reply of the nominal emperor was merely an apology for the conduct of his supporters. He indeed, "had not now the power either to command or to forbid. He was no longer emperor; he was merely the cause of war."

The following description has the appearance of being written by an eyewitness of the respective scenes:—

The envoy of Sabinus "had hardly returned to the Capitol, when the infuriated soldiery arrived, without any leader, every man acting on his own impulse. They hurried at quick march past the Forum and the temples which hang over it, and advanced their line up the opposite hill as far as the outer gates of the Capitol. There were formerly certain colonnades on the right side of the slope as one went up; the defenders, issuing forth on the roof of these buildings, showered tiles and stones on the Vitellians. The assailants were not

armed with anything but swords, and it seemed too tedious to send for machines and missiles. They threw lighted brands at a projecting colonnade, and following the track of the fire would have burst through the half-burnt gates of the Capitol, had not Sabinus, tearing down on all sides the statues, the glories of former generations, formed them into a barricade across the opening. They then assailed the opposite approaches to the Capitol, near the grove of the Asylum, and where the Tarpeian rock is mounted by a hundred steps. Both these attacks were unexpected: the closer and fiercer of the two threatened the Asylum. The assailants could not be checked as they mounted the continuous line of buildings, which, as was natural in a time of profound peace, had grown up to such a height as to be on a level with the soil of the Capitol. A doubt arises at this point, whether it was the assailants who threw lighted brands on to the roofs, or whether, as the more general account has it, the besieged thought thus to repel the assailants, who were now making vigorous progress. From them the fire passed to the colonnades adjoining the temples: the eagles supporting the pediment, which were of old timber, caught the flames. And so the Capitol, with its gates shut, neither defended by friends nor spoiled by a foe, was burnt to the ground."

The historian proceeds to relate the final victory of the Vitellians. The besiegers "burst in, carrying everywhere the firebrand and the sword." Some of the Vespasian leaders were cut down at once: the younger of the Flavian princes, Domitian, unluckily for his own fame and the empire, escaped in the disguise of an acolyte of the temple, while Sabinus and the consul Quinctius Atticus were loaded with

chains and brought before Vitellius. He received his captives "with anything but anger in his words and looks, amidst the murmurs of those who demanded the privilege of slaying them and their pay for the work they had done." He was preparing to intercede: he was compelled to yield; he was now a mere cipher; and the body of Sabinus, pierced and mutilated, and with the head severed from it, was dragged to the Gemoniæ.

In a few days the Flavian legions were at the gates of Rome. Numerous engagements took place before the walls, and amid the beautiful gardens in the suburbs, generally ending in favor of the Flavians. The Vitellians were defeated at every point. But they rallied again within the city.

"The populace," says Tacitus, "stood by and watched the combatants," as the people of Paris did when the Allies were, in 1814, fighting with the French for the possession of Montmartre; "and as though it had been a mimic combat"—of gladiators in the arena, or of the Red and Blue factions of charioteers in the Flaminian Circus—"encouraged first one party and then the other by their shouts and plaudits. Whenever either side gave way, they cried out that those who concealed themselves in the shops, or took refuge in any private house, should be dragged out and butchered, and they secured the larger share of the booty; for, while the soldiers were busy with bloodshed and massacre, the spoils fell to the crowd. It was a terrible and hideous sight that presented itself throughout the city. Here battle and death were raging: there the bath and the tavern were crowded. In one spot were pools of blood and heaps of corpses, and close by prostitutes and men of character as infamous. There were all

the debaucheries of luxurious peace, all the horrors of a city most cruelly sacked, till one was ready to believe the country to be mad at once with rage and lust."

Amid this scene of carnage it is some satisfaction to know that condign punishment fell on the German soldiers. They were driven to their last stronghold. The prætorian camp to which they had fled was desperately defended as well as strenuously assailed. The Flavians, expecting that Rome itself would stand a siege, had brought with them their artillery: with their catapults they cleared the battlements; they raised mounds or towers to the level of the ramparts: they applied fire to the gates. The gates were battered down; the walls were breached; quarter was denied; and, according to one account, fifty thousand men were slain.

Vitellius made a vain attempt to escape. His wife Galeria had a house on the Aventine, and thither he was conveyed in a litter, purposing to fly in the night-time to his brother's camp at Tarracina. But, infirm of purpose, he returned to the palace, whence even the meanest slaves had fled, or where those who remained in it shunned his presence. He wandered through its long corridors and halls, shrinking from every sound: "he tried the closed doors, he shuddered in the empty chambers," he trembled at the echo of his own footfalls. In the morning he was discovered; "his hands were bound behind his back; he was led along with tattered robes; many reviled, no one pitied him." He was cut down by a German soldier, who may have owed him a grudge, or have wished to release him from insult. The soldiers pricked him on with their weapons when his pace slackened, or stopped him to witness his own statues hurled from their pedestals

and broken by their fall. He was compelled to gaze on the spot where a few months before Galba had fallen. A sword placed beneath his chin kept his head erect, exposing to a brutal mob his haggard looks; his visage was besmeared with mud and filth; and wounded as he already was, he was smitten on the cheek as he passed through the long files of his persecutors. When he reached the Gemoniæ, where the corpse of Flavius Sabinus had so recently lain, he fell under a shower of blows; "and the mob," says Tacitus (and he might probably have added senators and knights also), "reviled him when dead with the same heartlessness with which they had flattered him living. One speech, it was his last, showed a spirit not utterly degraded. To a tribune who insulted him he answered—"Yet I was once your emperor."

We must not pass over, though we can merely refer to, an episode in the 'History' of Tacitus, that in which he treats of the revolt of the Germans. The destruction of three emperors, the disturbances in Judæa, the devastation of Italy, had severely strained the sinews of the empire. But its imminent danger at this period lay not south of the Alps, but on the borders of the Rhine and the Danube. The main interest of this episode consists not in sieges and battles, in the fidelity or faithlessness of States or individuals, in the lawless conduct of the armies, or the feeble and fluctuating measures of their generals. These were features common to every district visited by the civil, or more properly the imperial, wars of 69 and 70 A.D. The revolt of Germany was an insurrection against Roman rule itself, not against any one of the four competitors for the purple. It was a widely spread, for a while an

ably organized movement, and at more than one period it had the appearance of a successful one. It reveals to us how deeply that rule had been affected by the extravagance and cruelty of such Cæsars as Caligula or Nero; to what extent by their indulgence they had demoralized the armies and degraded the majesty of the empire. Yet it also shows how strong and effective was its organization; how unable to cope with it were the most valiant and disciplined of the rebels. Had the coalition of Germans and Gauls been sound and sincere, had the authors and leaders of it added to their enthusiasm the steady and sagacious temper of the warriors and statesmen who had made Rome the mistress of the world, it is difficult to see how the empire could have survived, bleeding and faint as it was at the time from a fierce civil conflict of about eighteen months. The purpose of the confederates was to throw off then and forever the yoke of Rome, —to effect on a far grander scale what the Italians had attempted more than a century and a half before, when they set up a new capital, Italica, and threatened to destroy the den of the Roman wolves. It was a hostile empire that the Germans aimed at—a far more formidable one than the Parthian had ever been, or than the great Mithridates had ever imagined. Independent Germany would not supply the legions with recruits; independent Gaul would not pay into the Roman treasury bars of silver, or sesterces. Both Gauls and Germans were well acquainted with Roman tactics; many thousands of both nations were enrolled in the legions or served as auxiliaries, and so were the better able to encounter them in the field.

On the other hand, the eastern provinces were ill-fitted to recruit the armies of Rome, now in some meas-

ure thinned and exhausted by the civil war. By Italy itself, at least south of the Po, a very few cohorts only could be furnished. The brave and hardy Samnites and Marisians no longer existed in any number. They had been swept off in the Social and earlier Civil wars. Much of their land had become sheep-walks; and the place of hardy shepherds, ploughmen, and vine-dressers was filled up by slaves. The once populous Latium was divided among a few land-holders, and towns like Gabii or Ulubræ now stood in huge parks, and when not quite deserted, were inhabited by a few peasants or tavern-keepers. The large farms, said Pliny the Naturalist, have been the ruin of Italy.

All these circumstances rendered the German revolt most grave and menacing. That it appeared so to Tacitus is plain from several passages in his works. Could the Germans only be induced to destroy one another, Rome might sleep in comparative security, and thank her presiding deities for the feuds of her enemy. In his 'Germany'* he writes thus of a happy accident of the kind: "The Chamavi and Angrivarii utterly exterminated the Bructeri, with the common help of the neighboring tribes, either from hatred of their tyranny, or from the attractions of plunder, or from heaven's favorable regard to us. It did not even grudge us the spectacle of the conflict. I pray that there may long last among the nations if not a love for us, at least a hatred for each other; for, while the destinies of empire hurry us on, fortune can bestow no greater boon than discord among our foes."

In Antonius Primus we have at least the semblance of an adventurous and able leader of a division. He

* Chap. 33.

is a sort of Achilles or Joachim Murat; but in Claudius Civilis we have an able general and statesman combined. Tacitus evidently bestowed great pains on his portraiture. Civilis was of a noble Batavian family, and had served twenty-five years in the Roman armies. He must have been forty at least when he formed the project of revolt, since for a quarter of a century he had fought wherever the imperial eagles flew, or been stationed wherever there was a Roman camp. For some offence he had incurred the displeasure of a Cæsar or his legate. "It is," he says, "a noble reward that I have received for my toils—my brother murdered, myself imprisoned, my death demanded by the savage clamor of a legion; and for which wrongs I by the law of nations now demand vengeance."

Civilis perceiving, or surmising that since Nero's death Rome was in no condition to war successfully with a distant ally, devoted himself thenceforth to what he justly considered a noble cause. The Batavian Wallace was no barbarian. Like the Cheruscan German hero Arminius, he had received a Roman education, and he had learned more than schoolmasters, lecturers or books could teach him. He had seen the capital in perhaps its most low and degraded state; he had witnessed the public excesses and prodigality of Nero; he had perhaps heard whispered, with bated breath, of the orgies of the palace. The hour, it seemed to him, had come when he might deliver the Batavian island, if not Germany itself, from the tyranny and the vices of Rome.

As to the Germans of the Rhine, they had little dread from the garrisons or camps of the Cæsar. Vitellius had withdrawn from many if not all of them

their best troops when he despatched seven legions across the Alps; and in fact there was just then no Cæsar. Galba had been murdered, Otho had destroyed himself, and Vitellius was daily exhibiting his unfitness for empire. Vespasian, whose character he knew, might give cause for some alarm to Civilis. They had once been companions in arms, and even friends; for the Flavian competitor for the throne was at one time, like Civilis himself, an obscure adventurer, and his chance of victory was still doubtful. The very attempt, however, of the Flavian was favorable to the designs of the Batavian, since he could and for a while did, pretend that he was recruiting and drilling soldiers for his former comrade; and he had even instructions from Antonius Primus to hinder any more German levies from being sent southward. Here, then, was an excellent mask for the first movements of the conspiracy of Gaul and Teuton against Rome.

By his eloquence, his skill in political combination, and by his knowledge of the character and condition at the time of the leading men of Rome and the empire, Civilis was enabled to effect a general confederation of all the Netherland tribes, both Celtic and German. He availed himself of the popular religion or superstition. The name of Veleda has already been mentioned. "She was regarded," says Tacitus, "by many as a divinity." The dwelling of this Deborah of the Bructeri was a lofty tower in the neighborhood of the river Lippe (Luppia). Many were those who consulted, but none were permitted to see her. Mystery, she justly held—and her opinion has been held by many prophetic persons both before and since Veleda delivered oracles—"inspired the greater respect." The questions of her suppliants and the answers to them

were conveyed by a relative of the prophetess. The first successes of the revolt greatly increased her reputation, for she had foretold victory to the Germans. With her Civilis was in constant communication—doubtless supplied her with the latest news from Gaul, Italy, and the Rhine; and thus her predictions, being not without foundation in facts, gained for the Batavian leader some allies, and induced many tribes of Germany to send him subsidies or supplies for his army.

The advantages possessed by the Batavians are thus set forth by their commander. Collecting his countrymen in one of the sacred groves, he thus harangued them: "There is now no alliance, as once there was [with Rome]. We are treated as slaves. We are handed over to prefects and centurions, and when they are glutted with our spoils and our blood, then they are changed, and new receptacles for plunder, new terms for spoliation, are discovered. Now the conscription is at hand, tearing, we may say, forever children from parents, and brothers from brothers. Never has the power of Rome been more depressed. In the winter quarters of the legions there is nothing but property to plunder and a few old men. Only dare to look up, and cease to tremble at the empty names of legions. For we have a vast force of horse and foot; we have the Germans our kinsmen; we have Gaul bent on the same objects."*

On another occasion, addressing the people of Trêves (Treveri) he says:—"What reward do you and other enslaved creatures expect for the blood which you have shed so often? What but a hateful service, perpetual tribute, the rod, the axe, and the passions of a ruling

* Hist., iv. ch. 14.

race? See how I, the prefect of a single cohort, with the Batavians and the Canninefates, a mere fraction of Gaul, have destroyed their vast but useless camps, or am pressing them with the close blockade of famine and the sword. In a word, either freedom will follow on our efforts, or, if we are vanquished, we shall but be what we were before." *

The Roman view of the question Tacitus has given in the speech of Petilius Cærealis, the ablest officer engaged in the German war. He had shown in action that the union of Gauls and Germans could not be depended on: that although trained in Roman barracks, the tribes of Rhineland and Batavia were unable, in the long-run, to mate and master the discipline, the swift and precise movements, of the regular legions. Gauls, he said, can have no real affinity with Germans. He proceeds: "It was not to defend Italy that we"—the Romans—"occupied the borders of the Rhine, but to insure that no second Ariovistus should seize the empire of Gaul. Do you fancy yourselves to be dearer in the eyes of Civilis and the Batavians and the Transrhenane tribes than your fathers and grandfathers were to their ancestors? There have ever been the same causes to make the Germans cross over into Gaul—lust, avarice, and the longing for a new home, prompting them to leave their own marshes and deserts, and to possess themselves of this most fertile soil, and of you its inhabitants.

"Gaul has always had its petty kingdoms and intestine wars, till you submitted to our authority. We, though so often provoked, have used the right of conquest to burden you only with the cost of main-

* Ibid, ch. 31.

taining peace. For the tranquility of nations cannot be preserved without armies; armies cannot exist without pay; pay cannot be furnished without tribute: all else is common between us. You often command our legions. You rule these and other provinces. There is no privilege, no exclusion. From worthy emperors you derive equal advantage, though you dwell so far away, while cruel rulers are most formidable to those near at hand. Endure the passions and rapacity of your masters, just as you bear barren seasons, and excessive rains, and other natural evils. There will be vices as long as there are men. But they are not perpetual, and they are compensated by the occurrence of better things."

Civilis was in the end unsuccessful. He was deserted, if not actually betrayed, by his allies; with the usual fickleness of barbarians, their zeal soon cooled down: some thought they did enough for him if they helped him to win a battle or two; some that they did enough for themselves when they had plundered a Roman colony or camp. Soldiers who went to their homes or turned to common brigandage when they pleased, were not fitted to contend long with the severely disciplined Roman legions; and as soon as Vespasian was able to pour division after division into the seat of war, the Batavian commonwealth ceased to exist. Even Civilis perceived at last that he must come to terms with the legate, Petilius Cerialis. With the preparation for their interview the mutilated 'History' closes abruptly; the fragment, however, is too interesting to be omitted.

The lower classes of the Batavians were murmuring at the length of the war; the nobles were still more impatient and spoke in fiercer language. "We have

been driven into war," they said, "by the fury of Civilis. He sought to counterbalance his private wrongs by the destruction of his nation. We are at the last extremity. The Germans already are falling away from us; the Gauls have returned to their servitude; we must repent, 'and avow our repentance by punishing the guilty.'

"These dispositions did not escape the notice of Civilis. He determined to anticipate them, moved not only by weariness of his sufferings, but also by the clinging to life which often breaks the noblest spirits. He asked for a conference. The bridge over the river Nabalia was cut down, and the two generals advanced to the broken extremities. Civilis thus opened the conference: "If it were before a legate of Vitellius that I were defending myself, my acts would deserve no pardon, my words no credit. All the relations between us were those of hatred and hostility, first made so by him, and afterwards embittered by me. My respect for Vespasian is of long standing. While he was still a subject we were called friends. This was known to Prince Antonius, whose letters urged me to take up arms, for he feared lest the legions of Germany and the youth of Gaul should cross the Alps. What Antonius advised by his letters, Herodonius suggested by word of mouth. I fought the same battle in Germany as did Mucianus in Syria, Aponius in Mœsia, Flavianus in Pannonia.'" . . . . . .

The mutilation of ancient manuscripts is one of the curiosities no less than the calamities of literature. By an unaccountable coincidence—can it have been accident, or was it design?—the 'Annals' also, as we have them, close with an interrupted speech of the dying Thrasea. In each instance so great is our loss

that we may well apply to Tacitus the lines of Milton—

> "Oh sad Virgin, that thy power
> Might raise Musæus from his bower,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Or call up him that left half told
> The story of Cambuscan bold."

CHAPTER VIII.

'HISTORY.'

VESPASIAN.

THE cool and wary veteran was in no haste to take possession of the capital of the Roman world. He had accepted, with seeming reluctance, the title of emperor. He might fairly be perplexed by the conduct of Mucianus, since, although when success was doubtful he had urged Vespasian to comply with the desire of the soldiers, yet, now that the prize was won, might he not claim it for himself? Assured of the loyalty of his elder son, Titus, he might view with just suspicion the designs of his younger son, Domitian—not because this vain and profligate boy was in himself formidable, but because it was impossible to foresee what might happen in a city where a venal soldiery, a servile senate, and a brutal mob might, at any moment, start a new competitor for the throne. Were the rich, the eloquent, the magnificent Mucianus, to greet him on his arrival with such words as—

> "Sir, by your patience,
> I hold you but as subject of this war,
> Not as a brother,"*—

* King Lear, Act v.

what answer could the plain, uneloquent, and low-born townsman of Reatè have returned?

Vespasian, by delaying his entrance into the capital, obtained two advantages. Firstly, he incurred no immediate unpopularity, as the unfortunate Galba had done, through the cruelties and misconduct of his soldiers.

"When Vitellius was dead," writes the historian, "the war indeed had come to an end; but peace had yet to begin. Sword in hand, throughout the capital, the conquerors hunted down the conquered with merciless hatred. The streets were choked with carnage, the squares and temples reeked with blood; for men were massacred everywhere as chance threw them in the way. Soon, as their license increased, they began to search for and drag forth hidden foes. Whenever they saw a man tall and young they cut him down, making no distinction between soldiers and civilians. But the ferocity which, in the first impulse of hatred, could be gratified only by blood, soon passed into the greed of gain. They let nothing be kept secret, nothing be closed. Vitellianists, they pretended, might thus be concealed. Here was the first step to breaking open private houses—here, if resistance was made, a pretext for slaughter. The most needy of the populace and the most worthless of the slaves did not fail to come forward and betray their wealthy masters; others were denounced by their friends. Everywhere were lamentations and wailings, and all the miseries of a captured city, till the license of the troops of Otho and Vitellius, once so odious, was remembered with regret. The leaders of the party, so energetic in kindling strife, were incapable of checking the abuse of victory."

Secondly, by remaining for some time at Alexandria, he was in a position to lay an embargo on the corn-supply from Egypt, one of the principal granaries of Rome. And besides that, he was within a few days' sail of the province of Africa, whence she derived also a large portion of her daily bread. Nothing was so likely to excite the Roman mob as even the apprehension of a dearth. Even if Mucianus had coveted the purple, he was comparatively feeble so long as the Flavian Cæsar could retard or withhold the staple food of the capital.

Adverse winds favored Vespasian's purpose of not arriving prematurely at Rome. He found that confidence might be placed in the governor of Syria; he wished, perhaps, that the first necessary severities should be over before he presented himself at the gates. Meanwhile his sojourn at Alexandria was not without favorable results for him. "Vespasian," observes Dean Marivale, "was already assuming in the eyes of the Romans something of the divine character; the Flavian race was beginning to supplant the Julian in their imagination, or rather, what was wanting to the imagination was supplied by the spirit of flattery which represented the hero himself and all that concerned him in factitious colors. It began to be affirmed that the marvelous rise of the Sabine veteran had been signified long before by no doubtful omens at home; a Jewish captive, the historian Josephus, had prophetically saluted him as emperor; the "common" and "constant belief" of the Jews, that from the midst of them should spring a ruler of the world, was declared to have received in this event its glorious consummation." *

* History of the Romans, ch. lvii.

That a predication which for many generations had fed the hopes and soothed the sorrows of the children of Israel should find its fulfilment in the person of an obscure Gentile, was certainly not intended by prophet or seer. But the faith of believers in it was singularly confirmed by two events that happened to Vespasian in Egypt. It is not by any means easy to discover what were the religious feelings of Tacitus; at times he appears to have been a fatalist, at times an orthodox believer in the religion of the State; in the following narrative he has evidently no doubt as to the truth of the cure, if not the miracle wrought by the emperor.

"In the months during which Vespasian was waiting at Alexandria for the periodical return of the summer gales and settled weather at sea, many wonders occurred which seemed to point him out as the object of the favor of heaven and the partiality of the gods. One of the common people of Alexandria, whom all men there knew to be blind, threw himself at the emperor's knees, and implored him with groans to heal his infirmity. He begged Vespasian that he would deign to moisten his cheeks and eyeballs with his spittle. Another with a diseased hand prayed that the limb might feel the print of a Cæsar's foot. At first Vespasian ridiculed and repulsed them. They persisted, and he, though on the one hand he feared the scandal of a fruitless attempt, yet, on the other, was induced by the entreaties of the men and by the language of his flatterers to hope for success. At last he ordered that the opinion of physicians should be taken, as to whether such blindness and infirmity were within the reach of human skill. They discussed the matter from different points of view. 'In the one

case,' they said, 'the faculty of sight was not wholly destroyed, and might return if the obstacles were removed; in the other case, the limb, whichhad fallen into a diseased condition, might be restored if a healing influence was applied;" such, perhaps, might be the pleasure of the gods, and the emperor might be chosen to be the minister of the divine will; at any rate, all the glory of a successful remedy would be Cæsar's, while the ridicule of failure would fall on the sufferers. And so Vespasian, supposing that all things were possible to his good fortune, and that nothing was any longer past belief, with a joyful countenance, amid the intense expectation of the multitude of bystanders, accomplished what was required. The hand was instantly restored to its use, and the light of day again shone upon the blind. Persons actually present attest both facts, even now, when nothing is to be gained by falsehood."

Voltaire joyfully proclaimed the authenticity of this miracle; Hume applauds the cautious and penetrating genius of the historian. Paley dissects the particulars of the narrative, and points out a flaw in it. The blind man applied to the emperor for his aid "by the advice of the God Serapis, whom the Egyptians, devoted as they are to many superstitions, worship more than any other divinity." Tacitus, Paley infers, put in these words as a saving clause, in order that his readers might not suspect him of a weak credulity. It will hardly be denied that this pagan miracle was well attested.

His success in the healing of the lame and blind inspired Vespasian with a keen desire to visit the sanctuary of the god who had afforded him this opportunity for displaying a power, till then quite unsuspected

by himself, and again a wonder was vouchsafed to a Cæsar in whom imagination was not a prevailing element, and who probably was content with the religion of the State and his Sabine forefathers. A deity so wise as Serapis must be able to give him sound advice about his own interests. He gave orders that, during his visit, all persons should be excluded from the temple. He had entered and was absorbed in worship.—

"When he saw behind him one of the chief men of Egypt, named Basilides, whom he knew at the time to be detained by sickness at a considerable distance, as much as several days' journey from Alexandria. He inquired of the priests, whether Basilides had on this day entered the temple. He inquired of others whom he met whether he had been seen in the city. At length, sending some horsemen, he ascertained that at that very instant the man had been eighty miles distant. He then concluded that it was a divine apparition, and discovered an oracular force in the name of Basilides [son of a king]."

The unfavorable winds that detained him at Alexandria deprived Vespasian of the opportunity for presiding at the solemn and important ceremony of laying the foundation of the new Capitol. Its restoration was the first care of the senate as soon as peace was established in the city; for while the temple was a charred and shapeless ruin, the fortunes of the empire seemed to suffer an eclipse. For an account of the ceremonial observed we borrow—and English readers will be grateful to us for doing so—the words of Dean Merivale:—

"This pious work was intrusted, according to ancient precedent, to one of the most respected of the citizens, by name Lucius Vestinus, who, though only

of knightly family, was equal in personal repute to any of the senators. The Haruspices, whom he consulted, demanded that the ruins of the fallen building should be conveyed away and cast into the lowest places of the city, and the new temple erected precisely on the old foundations; for the gods, they declared, would have no change made in the form of their familiar dwelling. On the 20th of June, 70 A.D., being a fair and cloudless day, the area of the temple precincts was surrounded with a string of fillets and chaplets. Soldiers chosen for their auspicious names were marched into it, bearing boughs of the most auspicious trees; and the Vestals, attended by a troop of boys and girls, both whose parents were living, sprinkled it with water drawn from bubbling founts or running streamlets. Then preceded by the pontiffs, the prætor Helvidius, stalking round, sanctified the space with the mystical washing of sow's, sheep's, and bull's blood, and placed their entrails on a grassy altar. This done, he envoked Jove, Juno, and Minerva, and all the patrons of the empire, to prosper the undertaking, and raise by divine assistance their temple, founded by the piety of men. Then he touched with his hand the connected fillets, and the magistrates, the priests, the senators, the knights, with a number of the people, lent their strength to draw a great stone to the spot where the building was to commence. Beneath it they laid pieces of gold and silver money, minted for the occasion, as well as of unwrought metal; for the Haruspices forbade either stone or metal to be used which had been employed before for profane purposes. The temple rose from the deep substructions of Tarquinius exactly as was required on the plan of its predecessor. Formerly,

when this fane was restored under Catulus, it was wished to give greater effect to the cell by placing it on a flight of steps; and it was proposed not to heighten the building itself, which the Haruspices forbade, but to lower the platform before it. But this platform was itself the roof of a labyrinth of vaults and galleries, used for offices and storerooms, and this expedient was pronounced impracticable. Vespasian, more fortunate than his predecessor, obtained permission to raise the elevation of the edifice, which now, perhaps for the first time, was allowed to overtop the colonnades around it, and to fling its broad bulk athwart the region of the southern sky, in which the auspices were taken from the neighboring summit of the citadel."*

When Vespasian at last entered his capital, he found awaiting him a very onerous task. The evil that Nero did lived after him. There was yet a remnant of his profligate companions; there were the informers who had furnished him with noble or wealthy victims; there were criminals to punish, and wrongs and sufferings, if possible, to heal; there were greedy soldiers to fee, and there was an empty treasury. Avarice is the only grave fault with which Tacitus upbraids his early patron. Perhaps a more appropriate term would be, rigid and necessary economy. To replenish the treasury from the northwestern provinces or Italy was next to impossible. The Othonians, Vitellians, and the legions of Antonius Primus had not merely carried off the money, but also burnt the dwellings and wasted the crops of the inhabitants.

* History of the Romans, ch. lvii.

By the mutilation of the 'History,' we lose Tacitus for our guide during a most important reign, and beyond his footsteps we cannot go. It will suffice to say that Mucianus, after restoring peace and order to Rome, preferred the ease of a private station and the enjoyment of an ample fortune to the cares and perils of a throne; that Antonius Primus was cooly thanked for his services, and dismissed into obscurity, the only trace of him thenceforward being some complimentary verses of Martial's; that the extravagance of the Julian dynasty was succeeded by the sobriety of the Flavian; and that if Rome did not regain a freedom she would have abused, she enjoyed a respite from tyranny and war, under which she flourished for a season. Had the books that recorded Domitian's reign been preserved, there can be little doubt that the historian would have written them with the pen that was afterwards to describe the gloomy period of Tiberius and the hideous excesses of Nero.

The reign, indeed, of the first Flavian Cæsar, extending over a period of ten years, passed away in uneventful tranquility. Its more remarkable features were the simple life and moderation of the imperial household; the deference of the emperor to the senate; the replantation of colonies; peace on the frontiers, after the revolts in Judæa and Germany had been suppresed; the revival and encouragement of learning, and literature, and even care for the people.

To English readers the most interesting portion of the 'History' will probably be that in which Tacitus treats of the Jewish people and the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem,—and to that we now turn.

Bearing in mind the historian's relation to Vespasian and Titus, the conquerors of Judæa, to whom he

owed his first advancement in public life, his account of the origin, the religion, the manners and customs of the Jewish people, is inexplicable, and, indeed, considering his opportunities for informing himself on the subject, without any apparent excuse. It cannot have been for want of means of inquiry or materials for truth that he thus misrepresents this "peculiar people." Their annals were not like those of Egypt, carved on stone, or written in symbols or an unknown tongue, both of which a century ago were unintelligible to the learned of modern Europe; nor were they stamped on bricks, like the archives of Nineveh and Babylon, which we are now only learning to read. Every educated Roman, and most Roman officials, from governors of provinces to farmers of the taxes, read and spoke Greek as easily as they did their native Latin; and the annals, the ritual, the theology of the Jews were communicated to strangers in the pages of the Septuagint more than three centuries before the time of Tacitus. The capital as well as the provinces swarmed with Jews or Proselytes to Judaism, and in any one of the fourteen "regions," of Rome there were Rabbins, learned in the laws of Moses, and in the chronicles of the judges, kings, and high priests of Israel and Judah. With such resources at hand, the most inquisitive and skeptical of ancient historians contented himself with hearsay and idle traditions, and denied to an ancient race possessing a written story—to say nothing of sublime poetry, of moral and even metaphysical philosophy of a high order—the care and pains he bestowed on the idle rumors or political satires of Rome.

Still more extraordinary is the apathy of Tacitus in this portion of the 'History,' when it is certain that he had before him one at least of the works of Flavius

Josephus. Whether or no he consulted the 'Antiquities of the Jews,' or the autobiography of Josephus, or his tract against Apion, cannot be told; but there can be no doubt that he studied and borrowed from his 'Wars of the Jews' many facts relating to Vespasian's campaign's in Galilee, and to the siege of Jerusalem. Perhaps if the 'History' were complete as he wrote it, we should find that Josephus had been to Tacitus, for that portion of his narrative, what Polybius was to Livy while composing his Decades on the Punic and Macedonian wars.

We now afford our English readers a specimen or two of the unaccountable ignorance of Tacitus when treating of the origin and rites of the Jewish nation. "As I am about to relate," he writes, at the opening of the fifth book of the 'History,' "the last days of a famous city, it seems appropriate to throw some light on its origin. Some say that the Jews were fugitives from the island of Crete, who settled on the nearest coast of Africa about the time when Saturn was driven from his throne by the power of Jupiter." "Evidence of this is sought in the name. There is a famous mountain in Crete called Ida; the neighboring tribe, the Idæi, came to be called Judæi by a barbarous lengthening of the national name. Others assert that in the reign of Isis the overflowing population of Egypt, led by Hierosolymus and Judas, discharged itself into the neighboring countries. Many, again, say that they were a race of Ethiopian origin, who in the time of King Cepheus were driven by fear and hatred of their neighbors to seek a new dwelling-place. Others describe them as an Assyrian horde, who, not having sufficient territory, took possession of part of Egypt, and founded cities of their own in what

is called the Hebrew country, lying on the borders of Syria." In the last sentences there is a glimpse of some research. Had Tacitus peeped into the books of Genesis and Exodus, and then into Herodotus?* For there is here an apparent allusion to the migration of Jacob and his sons into Egypt, to the departure from the land of Goshen, and to the shepherd kings.

Then we come to the boils and blains that so grievously afflicted the Egyptians, but which Tacitus saddles on the Hebrews. King Boccharis, warned by the oracle of Hammon, cleanses his realm and expels from his land this impure race "detested by the gods." It is a calumny of this kind that kindled the wrath of Josephus against Apion. Tacitus proceeds: "The people, who had been collected after diligent search, finding themselves left in a desert, sat for the most part in a stupor of grief, till one of the exiles, Moyses by name, warned them not to look for any relief from God or man, but to trust to themselves, taking for a heaven-sent leader that man who should first help them to be quit of their present misery. They agreed, and in utter ignorance began to advance at random. Nothing, however, distressed them so much as the scarcity of water, and they had sunk ready to perish in all directions over the plain"—here it would seem that Tacitus had the Book of Exodus or Josephus before him—"when a herd of wild asses were seen to retire from their pasture to a rock shaded by trees. Moyses followed them, and, guided by the appearance of a grassy spot, discovered an abundant supply of water. This furnished relief. After a continuous journey for six days, on the seventh day they possessed

themselves of a country from which they expelled the inhabitants, and in which they founded a city and a temple." This is, indeed, an abridgement of history! —the forty years spent in the wilderness and the conquest of Palestine compressed into a period of seven days!

Now for the rites and ceremonies observed by the Jews, according to Tacitus. Mindful of the services done them by the wild asses, they, in their holy place, consecrated an image of the animal who delivered them from death by thirst in the wilderness. Peculiar and perverse in all they do, the worship, invented by Moyses, is utterly unlike that of other nations. "Things sacred with us, with them have no sanctity, while they allow what with us is forbidden. Apis, in the form of an ox, was one of the greatest of Egyptian deities; therefore the Jews sacrifice that animal." As Tacitus in his day must have seen many hundreds of oxen sacrificed on Roman altars, it is not easy to understand why the Jews were perverse in doing the like. They abhor and abstain from swine's flesh, in remembrance of what they suffered when infected by the leprosy to which this animal is liable. They rest on the seventh day, because it brought with it an end of their toils; and "after a while the charm of indolence beguiled them into giving up the seventh year also to inaction."

And yet this eccentric people, who feared not the gods and despised or hated all uncircumcised mankind—who had not an idol in their temple nor permitted a picture to enter their dwellings—whose "customs, at once perverse and disgusting, owed their strength to their very badness,"—were not without their virtues, and these puzzled Tacitus far more

than their vices. To their own countrymen and to converts to their religion they are singularly charitable; and be it remarked that *charity*, in the Jewish and Christian import of the word, was unknown either to Greeks or Romans. Nay, Tacitus even cannot help admiring their conception of the Deity or some of their social practises. "It is a crime with them to kill a newly-born infant." It was not a crime at Rome. The Jews held "that the souls of all who perish in battle, or by the hands of the executioner, are immortal;" and in this faith they fought valiantly, they contemned death; they rejoiced in the number of their children. Of "the Deity, as one in essence, they have purely mental conceptions. They call those profane who make representations of God, in human shape, out of perishable materials. They believe that Being to be supreme and eternal, capable neither of representation nor of decay. They therefore do not allow any images to stand in their cites, much less in their temples. This flattery is not paid to their kings, nor this honor to our emperors." So far so good; but then follows a most unfortunate conjecture. "From the fact that the Jewish priests used to chant to the music of flutes and cymbals, and to wear garlands of ivy, and that a golden vine was found in the temple, some have thought that they worshipped Father Liber (Bacchus), the conqueror of the East, though their institutions do not by any means harmonize with the theory; for Liber established a festive and cheerful worship, while the Jewish religion is tasteless and mean."

Tacitus's credulity, or negligence in inquiry, as regards the religion of the Jews, did not extend to the creeds or ceremonies of other nations; on the contrary, he occasionally indulges himself and his

readers also with digressions on the subject. The vision beheld by Vespasian in the temple of Serapis leads him to describe the nature of that popular deity, and the cause and manner of his introduction into Alexandria. He mentions with evident interest the visit of Germanicus to the oracle of the Clarian Apollo, and he acquainted himself with the process used in consultation. "No Pythoness," he says, with a glance at Delphi and other shrines, "represents the god at Claros, but a priest, chosen from certain familes, especially a Milesian. This hierophant, after taking down the names and numbers of the inquirers, descends into an oracular cavern, in which there is a sacred spring. He drinks of its water, and then, though often ignorant of letters and ungifted with poetic talent, he gives the Clarian divinity's answers in verse, of which the subject is the secret or imparted wishes of the consultors of the oracle." In a similar manner he records the visit of Titus, then traveling from Corinth to Syria, to the temple of the Paphian Venus, in the island of Cyprus; and he thinks it not tedious to bestow a few words on the origin of the worship, the antiquity of the building, and the form of the goddess,—since nowhere else is she thus represented. The Venus of Paphos did not require a sculptor; an ordinary stone-mason sufficed. "Her image does not bear a human shape; it is a rounded mass, rising like a cone from a broad base to a small circumference." Hers was a primitive and humane worship. It was "forbidden to pour blood on the altar. The place of sacrifice was served only with prayers and pure flame; and though it stands in the open air it is never wet with rain." Animals, indeed, were offered, according to the whim of the worship-

pers; but they were always of "the male sex—and the surest prognostics were seen in the entrails of kids." These bloody rites were evidently of more recent date than the original sacrifices, just as the sanguinary oblations of the Aztecs supplanted the fruit and flower offerings of the original Mexicans.

Two causes for the ignorance or the indolence of Tacitus in this account of the Jews may be surmised. One, a general repugnance to the Hebrew race, that pervaded the Gentile world, and which is manifested by Roman satirists as well as by a sarcastic historian. The other is the arrogance displayed by Romans generally towards their Asiatic subjects, especially to the Syrians and Egyptians, with whom they were wont to confound the followers of Moses. Of each of these races the religious observances were often, though in vain, proscribed by the Roman Government, whether republican or imperial; and the worshippers of Isis, Astartè and Jehovah were driven from the capital and Italy. In the 'Annals' Tacitus never mentions the Jews without some expression of contempt; and when some thousands of them were sent, in the reign of Tiberius, to pine or perish in the unwholesome climate of Sardinia—the *Cayenne* of Rome—he cooly remarks it was a cheap riddance (*vile damnum*)—a loss of lives not worth consideration.

But when the historian gets clear of the rocks and shallows of rumor and remote events, his strength returns to him, and the poor remnant of his narrative that we have of the Jewish war enables us to measure as well as mourn for the portions we have lost. After a brief sketch of former invasions of Judæa by the Romans, he comes to that final rebellion which ended with the last dispersion of the Jewish people

and the demolition of Jerusalem itself. Cneius Pompeius in 63 A.D. had dismantled the walls of the city, but had left the temple standing. Judæa under its Maccabæan pontiffs had regained much of her early rank among nations, and under Herod, and afterwards under Agrippa, been dignified with the title of a kingdom. On the death of the latter it had become an appanage of the vast province of Syria; still it had not ceased to be a recognized portion of the empire. But the hour was at hand for the complete fulfillment of prophecies delivered long before there was an augur in Rome—of prophecies which seemed to have been accomplished when the Assyrian carried off Israel and Judah to the banks of the Euphrates, and made a heap of ruins the temple of Jehovah and the city of David. But the end was not to be under the first of the four great monarchies, but under the last.

"Peace," says Tacitus, "having been established in Italy, foreign affairs were once more remembered. Our indignation was heightened by the 'circumstance that the Jews alone had not submitted.'" Vespasian in 66 had been sent by Nero to put down the Jewish mutineers, and within the space of two summers had succeeded in making himself master of the entire level country and of all the cities, except Jerusalem. Vespasian was summoned from the camp to a throne, and his son Titus took his place in Judea.

We conclude this chapter with extracts from the 'History.' The English readers who may have looked into the 'Wars of the Jews' by Josephus, will perceive that Tacitus had before him the narrative of a conspicuous actor in the great catastrophe of the Hebrew nation.

"Prodigies had occurred, which this nation, prone to superstition, but hating all religious rites did not deem it lawful to expiate by offering and sacrifice. There had been seen hosts joining battles in the skies, the fiery gleam of arms, the temple illuminated by a sudden radiance from the clouds. The doors of the inner shrine were suddenly thrown open, and a voice of more than mortal tone was heard to cry that the gods were departing. At the same instant there was a mighty stir as of departure. Some few put a fearful meaning on these events, but in most there was a firm persuasion that in the ancient records of their priests was contained a prediction of how at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers coming from Judæa were to acquire universal empire. These mysterious prophecies had pointed to Vespasian and Titus; but the common people, with the usual blindness of ambition, had interpreted these mighty destinies of themselves, and could not be brought even by disasters to believe the truth. I have heard that the total number of the besieged, of every age and both sexes, amounted to six hundred thousand. All who were able bore arms, and a number more than proportionate to the population had the courage to do so. Men and women showed equal resolution, and life seemed more terrible than death, if they were to be forced to leave their country."

"The commanding situation of the city had been strengthened by enormous works, which would have been a thorough defence even for level ground. Two hills of great height were fenced in by walls which had been skillfully obliqued or bent inwards, in such a manner that the flank of an assailant was exposed to missiles. The rock terminated in a precipice; the

towers were raised to a height of sixty feet, where the hill lent its aid to the fortifications—where the ground fell, to a height of one hundred and twenty. They had a marvelous appearance, and to a distant spectator seemed to be of uniform elevation. Within were other walls surrounding the palace, and, rising to a conspicuous height, the tower Antonia, so called by Herod, in honor of Marcus Antonius.

"The temple resembled a citadel, and had its own walls, which were more laboriously constructed than the others. Even the colonnades with which it was surrounded formed an admirable outwork. It contained an inexhaustible spring: there were subterranean excavations in the hill, and tanks and cisterns for holding rain-water. The founders of the State had foreseen that frequent wars would result from the singularity of its customs, and so had made every provision against the most protracted siege. After the capture of their city by Pompeius, experience and apprehension had taught them much. Availing themselves of the sordid policy of the Claudian era to purchase the right of fortification, they raised in time of peace such walls as was suited for war. Their numbers were increased by a vast rabble collected from the overthrow of the other cities [by Vespasian]. All the most obstinate rebels had escaped into the place, and perpetual seditions were the consequence. There were three generals and as many armies. Simon held the outer and larger circuit of walls. John, also called Bargioras, occupied the middle city; Eleazar had fortified the temple. John and Simon were strong in numbers and equipment, Eleazar in position. There were continual skirmishes, surprises, and incendiary fires, and a vast quantity of corn was burnt. Before long,

John sent some emissaries, who, under pretence of sacrificing, slaughtered Eleazar and his partisans, and gained possession of the temple. The city was thus divided between two factions, till, as the Romans approached, war with the foreigner brought about a reconciliation."

"Such was this city and nation; and Titus Cæsar, seeing that the position forbade an assault or any of the more rapid operations of war, determined to proceed by earthworks and covered approaches. The legions had their respective duties assigned to them, and there was a cessation from fighting, till all the inventions used in ancient warfare, or devised by modern ingenuity, for the reduction of cities, were constructed."

We have seen what the pen of Tacitus could do when relating the storming and conflagration of the Capitol in the civil war, and so may imagine how he described the total demolition of a far older and holier temple. While watching in Rome the builders at their work of restoration of the one, and hearing the proclamation in the Forum of the destruction of the other shrine, he may have said to himself: 'the pride of a barbarous and superstitious people is humbled forever; but the glory of Jupiter, best and greatest, will always endure. From the fane of the Jews, the gods have departed, but the pontifex and the silent virgin will never cease to climb the Capitoline Hill.' "The destruction," says Dean Merivale, "never to be repaired, of the material temple of the Hebrews, cut the cords which bound the Christian faith to its local habitation, and launched it, under the hand of Providence, on its career of spiritual conquest; while the boasted reputation of the Capitol was a vain attempt to retain hold of the past, to

revive the lost or perishing, to reattach to new conditions of thought an outworn creed of antiquity."*

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE ORATORS; OR THE CAUSES OF THE DECLINE OF ELOQUENCE.

'THE Dialogue on the orators' is now generally admitted to have been written by Tacitus, although formerly it was ascribed to others—among them to Quintilian or the younger Pliny. The grounds of doubt arose from a fancied dissimilarity in its style to that of the unquestioned works of the historian. But there is nothing in the language of this dialogue that need disentitle it to a place among his writings. On the contrary, it displays several marks of his authorship, as well in the construction of sentences as in a sarcastic turn of mind. The 'Annals' are his latest, the 'Dialogue' is probably his earliest composition. The latter is more diffuse, the former more condensed; and this would naturally be the difference between the style of a young and that of a mature and perhaps aged writer.

The time at which Tacitus was training himself for the bar was one of conflict between those who desired to return to a healthier period of eloquence—and especially to the era of Hortensius and Cicero—and those who clung to modern fashion, maintaining that it was better suited to their more polished age. The Ciceronian manner, the former argued, attained to the highest perfection of a natural style. They applauded the graceful

* History of Romans under the Empire, vi. 598.

and often the dignified character of his sentences, the richness of his diction, his art in opening a speech, his felicity in shaping it, and the force or splendor of his perorations. Yet these virtues, it was maintained by the latter, would be accounted tedious by a generation of jurors and hearers less patient than their forefathers were of long sentences and artistically-constructed periods. The champions of the new fashion had some ground for their opinion. Not only are the races of men like leaves on trees, but their tastes also. The pulpit eloquence of Isaac Barrow might perplex rather than edify a modern congregation; the speeches of Chesterfield or Burke would more astonish than persuade a House of Commons at the present day. Sensational speeches were, in the earlier years of Tacitus, as much in vogue as sensational plays and novels are now in Britain. The fashion in style set in great measure by Seneca, and against which Quintilian, while admitting that author's great gifts, so warmly protested, affected the language of the bar as well as that of philosophy or literature. In Nero's time, when this half-prosaic, half-poetic diction reached its height, nothing would go down with those who frequented law courts or lecture rooms except short, sharp, epigrammatically-turned sentences. Commonplace thoughts, in order to make them appear new, rare, or ingenious, were twisted into innumerable forms, for the construction of which professors of rhetoric drew up rules and supplied examples. The Controversial and Suasorian essays of the oldest of the Senecas, who might have listened to Cicero himself, are a sort of recipe-books for a culinary process of dealing with eloquence. A better day, however, was at hand. Tacitus marks as the period of the greatest sensual

excesses in Rome that which separates the battle of Actium from the accession of Nerva; and he speaks of Vespasian's reign as the beginning of an epoch of improvement in morals and of amended taste in literature. The 'Dialogue on the Orators,' composed, if not made public, in the fifth year of that emperor's reign, displays the leading features of the controversy between the reformers and the corrupters of the Latin language. The advocates of a simpler and less artificial manner did not gain a complete victory, nor their opponents suffer an entire defeat. Even Quintilian, who, as he himself tells us, was the first to uplift his voice against a depraved fashion in writing and speaking, does not recommend a complete return to the theory or practice of the Ciceronian time. And he judged wisely and well. No sensible critic of the present moment would advise a recurrence to the language of Bacon or Addison. In his own writings Quintilian obeyed the laws which he prescribed to his pupils and readers. But although he set the example of a better form, he could not rekindle the spirit and passionate heat of the Catilinarian and Philippic orations. Some of the vices of the Neronian period were abandoned; yet even Tacitus himself is not quite free from the blemish of epigrammatic sentences, while in the verse of the time the reaction was even less complete.

Besides its proper subject, the decline and the possible revival of Roman oratory, the 'Dialogue' contains much information on literature generally. This will appear from a short sketch of its plot and *dramatis personæ*. Like many of Cicero's treatises on oratory and philosophy, it professes to be a reminiscence of a conversation heard by the author himself, and reported by him afterwards to a friend. "You

have often inquired of me, my good friend Justus Fabius," says Tacitus, "how and whence it comes that, while former times display a series of orators conspicuous for ability and their renown, the present age, devoid of them, and without any claim to the praise of eloquence, has scarcely retained even the name of an orator. By that appellation we understand only men of a bygone time; whereas in these days eloquent men are entitled speakers, pleaders, advocates, patrons; in short, everything else except—orators."

The dispute, like so many controversies, polemical or political, before and since, began upon a question not very nearly related to it. Caius Curiatius Maternus, a promising young barrister, was giving much anxiety to his friend Marcus Aper, a pleader then in high repute, by his passions for writing plays and by his neglect of the weightier matters of the law. In the first place, Maternus could not serve two masters. If he went on at his present rate in such unprofitable studies, he must lose many good clients. "Your friends," said Aper to him, "expect your patronage; the colonies invoke your aid; and municipal cities call for you in the courts. Such practice as you could command would soon make you rich. Think, I beseech you, what pretty pickings Eprius Marcellus and Vibius Crispus have already made by their profession, and no one knows who their fathers were; though everybody is aware that they were as poor as rats a few years ago. But neglect of your business is not the worst of it. Those blessed tragedies of yours will, by Hercules! get you into a serious scrape. Yesterday you read to an audience your last tragedy, 'Cato.' You must have heard already, for all the town is talking of it, that this piece is not relished in high quarters.

Folks are saying that you have thought much more of your hero than of yourself. Him, a grumbling old commonwealth man, you have drawn in the brightest colors. And what is Cato to you, or you to Cato, that you should run the risk of being sent on his account into exile to starve on some barren island?"

Aper was accompanied on this visit by another ornament of the Forum, and a common friend of Maternus and himself—Julius Secundus, an orator of whom Quintilian entertained great expectations. They were not fulfilled, for Julius died young. The remonstrances of Aper were heard with equanimity by Maternus. "I was quite prepared for this," he says; "to differ on this subject is grown familiar to us both. You wage incessant war against poetry; I consider it a client whom I am bound to defend. But it happens luckily that on this occasion a competent arbiter of our standing feud is present. Our friend Secundus, after hearing what we have each to say, will either enjoin me to give up writing verses, or, as I hope, will encourage me to abandon a profession I am weary of, and to pursue one in which I delight." Secundus doubts whether Aper will accept him as an umpire. "To tell you the truth," he says, "though I cannot myself make verses, I feel a partiality for those who can, especially for that excellent man and no less excellent poet, Saleius Bassus."

"Hang Saleius Bassus," retorts Aper, "and all his generation! Let him and all of his sort spin verses as they list, without interruption. *His* is not a case in point. He could not make tenpence a-day at the bar. But Maternus is something more and far better than a verse-monger. Why should he waste precious hours on his 'Cato' or 'Thyestes,' his 'Agamemnon'

or 'Domitius?'—he who is formed by nature to reach the heights of manly eloquence. As for your Saleius Bassus, it was very kind in Vespasian to give him lately fifty pounds; nay, the more so because our Cæsar is not usually so free of his money. But why should you, Maternus, who can earn thrice that sum when the courts are sitting, desire to put yourself on a level with an imperial pensioner? At the best, poets are very slenderly paid." And Aper then goes on pointing out the privations and difficulties of the worshippers of the Muses, much in the strain of Johnson's lines:—

> "Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause awhile from letters to be wise;
> There mark what ills the scholar's life assail—
> Toil, envy, want, the patron and the jail."

The vehement attack on poets by Aper is rebutted with great energy by Maternus; but their combat is but a skirmish preparatory to the main battle that follows, on the comparative merits of the old and the new schools of oratory. And now a fourth speaker is introduced in the 'Dialogue'—Vipstanus Messala, a soldier, and a pleader of great reputation, to whom Tacitus in his 'History' pays this singular tribute, that he was the only man of note who went over from Vitellius to Vespasian from honest motives. It is now seen that the 'Dialogue on Oratory' is constructed on the plan often adopted by Cicero in similar treatises. In the first place, the subject of the conversation is said to have been heard in his youth by the author of it—and in that respect Cicero follows the example set him by Plato; next, there is a little preliminary discussion that soon branches out into the main argument; thirdly, a friend joins the company after the

debate has made some progress; and lastly, Aper in Tacitus, and Antonius in Cicero, are nearly counterparts of each other in the character of their eloquence. It was said of Aper at the time that he owed his fame, not to art or literature, but to the natural powers of a vigorous understanding; and Antonius is made to say that "his fame would be the greater if he were regarded as a man wholly illiterate and void of education." In the chapter on his 'Life,' it was only possible to conjecture what was the training of Tacitus at the bar; but the dialogue now under examinatian may help us to perceive that he was a student of the oratorical works of the Ciceronian age, while his 'Annals' afford many tokens of his having been well-versed in the poetry of Virgil, and perhaps also in that of many other writers of the Augustan period, Livy included.

"English Readers" cannot be expected to take any lively interest in the respective merits of the old or new Roman orators. But they may not object to a brief sketch of what was thought to constitute a liberal education in Tacitus's day. The future historian may often be traced in the opinions of the juvenile author of this 'Dialogue.' His allusions to the bygone time are frequently a covert satire on the age in which he wrote. Some of the following extracts will show that even if Juvenal and Tacitus never met each other amid the vast population of Rome—where the one probably rented a fifth-story chamber, and the other a well-appointed house—yet that their views of the general corruption of literature, as well as of morals, coincided as closely as if they had sat at the same table, or exchanged opinions in a library or a lecture-room.

Messala takes the side of the older orators against Aper, the advocate of the new eloquence. He says: "Before entering on the subject of the decay of eloquence, it will not be useless to look back to the system of education that prevailed in former times, and to the strict discipline of our ancestors, in a point of so much moment as the formation of youth. In the times to which I now refer, the son of every family was the legitimate offspring of a virtuous mother." This not very charitable, yet perhaps not untrue, statement, is in the very spirit of Juvenal and Martial, who "knew the town" as well as the Higgins of Pope did. "The infant, as soon as born, was not consigned to the mean dwelling of a hireling nurse, but was reared and cherished in the bosom of a tender parent. To regulate all household affairs and attend to her children was, at that time, the highest commendation of women. Some kinswoman of mature years and distinguished by the purity of her life, was chosen for the guardian of the child. In her presence no indecent word or act was permitted. To her was intrusted the direction of the studies of her charge; nay more, his sports and recreations also, so that all might be conducted with modesty and respect for virtue. The tendency of this strict discipline was, that the nature of the young being trained up in purity and honesty, and not being warped by evil desires, they with their whole heart embraced sound instruction, and were fitted for their future calling, whether their inclination led them to a military career, to the knowledge of law, or the pursuits of eloquence."

"Whereas, nowadays," Messala continues, "an infant, as soon as it is born, is handed over to some paltry Greek maid-servant, who has for her assistants one

or more of the most rascally of the slaves, utterly unfit for any grave business. By their idle tales and blunders the tender and uninstructed minds of the children are stained, and not a soul in the house cares what he does or says before his young master. Nay, the parents themselves do not accustom them to honesty or modesty but make them familiar with ribaldry and chattering, so that in time they grow shameless and void of respect for themselves or others. Vices that may be said to be proper and peculiar to this city, it seems to me, they catch before their birth—such as a passion for stage-plays, gladiators, and horse-races. What room for honest pursuits is left for minds so occupied, or rather blockaded?"

This was a worshipful system of education to begin with, and it did not improve with the removal of the children from the nursery to school. No pains were taken to cultivate taste by reading the best authors; history and every branch of useful knowledge were neglected; even the study of men and manners was ignored. Precepters were chosen at hap-hazard, and all educational duties supposed to be fulfilled, provided only there was a decent form of instruction, in which the tutor was often incompetent to give, and the pupil reluctant to gain, any useful knowledge. After such a scholastic programme as this, we are prepared for Messala's saying—"It is notorious that eloquence, with the rest of the polite arts, has lost its former lustre, yet these evil effects are not owing to a dearth of men or decay of ability. The true causes of this decadence are the apathy of parents, the ignorance of instructors, the total neglect of sound discipline. The mischief began at Rome, it has overrun Italy, and is now rapidly pervading the provinces."

Messala proceeds to contrast the education of the young orator in his time with that which had prevailed in a better age. He describes the toil, the discipline, the exercises by which the aspirant to public honors was trained for his profession. His home-education had been sound. When arrived at the proper age for higher instruction, he was taken by his father, or some near relative, his guardian, to some eminent orator of the day. He attended his instructor on all occasions. With him he visited the Forum, listened to his pleadings in the courts of justice, noted in his books or his memory his public harangues, marked him when moved by passion, or when calmly stating his case, and admired his art or facility when the subject required a prompt and unstudied reply. Thus on the field of battle he learned the rudiments of rhetorical warfare. Nor did he confine his attention to his patron alone; he watched diligently the methods and the habits of other speakers, and so was the better able to distinguish between excellences and defects, or at least to select the species of eloquence most adapted to his own powers or temperment. This practical education was in strict conformity with the general character of the Roman mind. The greatest of Latin poets had told his countrymen that to other nations had been granted, in a measure denied to them, the arts of the sculptor and the painter, of the natural philosopher, nay, even of eloquence itself. But the lot assigned by the poet to the Roman people was to govern the human race, to lower the haughty, to spare the humble, to promote and cherish peace; and among the instruments by which their destiny would be accomplished, a liberal eloquence was not the least effective.

The discipline of the orator, indeed, was scarcely less severe in the good old times than that which qualified the soldier for his duties in war. "Military exercises were the important and unremitted object of the discipline of the legions. The recruits and young soldiers were constantly trained, both in the morning and in the evening, nor was age or knowledge allowed to excuse the veterans from the daily repetition of what they had completely learnt."* Even Cicero, when at the zenith of his fame, did not permit himself to forego the exercises of his assiduous youth; and the wary Augustus prepared for his speeches to the senate by declamation in his closet. "The orator," proceeds Messala, "was a real combatant matched and mated with an earnest antagonist, not a gladiator in a mock contest, fighting for a prize. His was a struggle for victory, before an audience always changing, yet always 'frequent and full.'" He addressed enemies as well as admirers, and both were severe critics of his merits or defects. In this clash of opinions the true orator flourished. He did not depend on the plaudits of the benches occupied by his friends only, but on the cheers extorted by him from those on which his opponents, and perhaps his personal or political foes, were seated; and the best of suffrages is reluctant applause.

Messala then goes on to describe the modern system of oratorical training. "Our young men," he says, with palpable indignation, "are taken to the schools of professors, who call themselves rhetoricians, whereas a more fitting name for them would be 'impostors.' Such gentry as now educate our youth were, in better times than ours, silenced by the censors, and ordered,

* Gibbon, 'Decline and Fall,' ch. i.

as Cicero tells us, 'to shut up their schools of impudence.' But no such wholesome discipline exists now, and our students are put in charge of oratorical mountebanks." He cannot decide whether the lecture-room itself, the company frequenting it, or the course of instruction employed, were the more prejudicial to the pupils, at least to such of them as have any true vocation for the art and mystery of eloquence. Boy-novices were set to declaim to boys, young men to young men. Ignorant speakers addressed hearers as ignorant as themselves. The very subjects on which they wrangled were useless. "They are of two kinds—persuasive or controversial. The former, supposed to be the easier, is usually assigned to the younger scholars; the latter is reserved for the more advanced. But for the real business of the bar, and for the objects of the advocate, both sorts are equally idle. No judge, deserving the name, would be *persuaded*, no opponent *confuted*, by those windy declamations. The topics chosen for exercise are alike remote from truth or even probability. 'Is it lawful to slay a tyrant? if not, what should be the punishment of the tyrannicide?' 'What rites and ceremonies are proper to be used during a raging pestilence!' 'If married women break their nuptial vows, or if maidens are wronged, how ought the adulterer or the seducer to be dealt with?' Such is the skimble-scamble stuff with which our budding orators are now crammed! Even in the lecture-room these themes are hackneyed, while in the courts of justice they are never debated. The language in which such frivolous exercises are written is on a par with the emptiness of the questions. It is unnatural, gaudy, bombastic. The superstructure is answerable to the foundation. In such 'schools of impudence'

our lads may be taught to chatter, but not to speak either in the senate or at the bar."*

The close of Messala's portion in the 'Dialogue,' and the earlier sections of that of Maternus, are unfortunately lost. He is made to discourse at the end, as he is reported to have done at first, with a fervor that seemed to lift him above himself. He evidently in part agreed with the defender of the moderns, Marcus Aper, and partly with the defender of the ancients, Vipstanus Messala. That we no longer produce such orators as adorned the commonwealth, as well in its decline as in its "most high and palmy state," is owing to the character of the times more than to the men living in them. Rarely does a quiet, settled and uniform government afford an opportunity for eloquence of the highest order. "Great"—that is, passionate "eloquence"—such as pervades the Verrine, Catilinarian and Philippic speeches of Cicero—"like flame, demands nourishment." Political commotions excite it, and the longer it burns the brighter its light. The spirit of the older speakers was fed by the turbulence of their age. He who could wield to his will a

* Juvenal, often the best commentator on his contemporary, Tacitus, notices the depraved condition of these mock discourses:—

"But Vectius, O that adamantine frame.
Has oped a rhetoric school of no mean fame,
Where boys in long succession, rave and storm
At tyranny, through many a crowded form.
The exercise he lately, sitting, read,
Standing distracts his miserable head,
And every day, and every hour, affords
The self-same subject, in the self-same words," &c.
—Sat. vii. [Gifford].

fierce democracy became its idol. Then every grade of society took a deep interest in public events and public men. Then few were content to give a silent vote in the senate, or shrank from the turmoil of the hustings and the Forum. In the conflict of parties, laws were multiplied; and scarcely a bill became law without a fierce opposition to it. The leading chiefs were the favorite demagogues. The magistrates were often engaged entire days in debate; and sometimes it was midnight before the assembly broke up. The people and the senate were generally at war with each other; the nobles themselves were divided by constant factions; even members of the same house were at variance; and no citizen was so revered as to be exempt from impeachment. Hence that flame of eloquence which blazed continually under the republican government, and hence the fuel that kept it alive.

"And remember," continues Maternus, "the position of the orator at that time." His importance and influence were not confined to the senate or the people. Foreign nations courted his friendship. Prætors and proconsuls going out to their provinces or returning from them did him homage. He could not stir from his house without observation and an obsequious crowd following him to the rostrum or the senate-house, or to the city gates if he were going to his country seat. Even if he were not entitled to lictors or fasces at the moment, yet as a private citizen his opinion influenced gowned senators: and his fame was well known even to the inhabitants of garrets and cellars, who picked up the crumbs from rich men's tables, when the sacrifices in the temples did not afford them meat, or the measure of corn supplied by the State was exhausted.

Maternus admits that the forms of proceeding and the rules of practice in his time were more conducive than those observed by the ancients to the purposes of truth and justice. There was then more freedom for the orator. He was not, as he is now, limited to a few hours in the delivery of a speech. If his genius prompted him, he might expatiate on the case in hand; if it suited his convenience, he might adjourn it. Maternus descends to minute particulars, though he thinks it not unlikely that his hearers will smile at them. The Greek or Roman orator was always in some degree an actor also. Hortensius, Cicero's most formidable antagonist, was very particular as to the plaits in his gown and the arrangement of his hair; and Caius Gracchus modulated his voice by a sort of pitch-pipe sounded when he spoke in too high or too low a key by an attendant slave. "But such niceties," says Maternus, "are no longer observed. The very robe now worn at the bar has an air of meanness. It sits close to the person: it renders graceful gestures impossible. Again, the courts of judicature are unfavorable to the speaker in them. Causes are now heard in small narrow rooms, in which it is not necessary to raise the voice, or to display energy in pleading. Whereas the true orator, like a noble horse, requires liberty and space. Before a few hearers his spirit droops: in a confined room his genius flags."

He winds up his argument with some timely and sound consolation to the men of his time. Oratory may be on the decline; but have we nothing to counterbalance the loss of it? Would we, if the choice were offered to us, return to the days when Rome exhibited one perpetual scene of contention? Could all the eloquence of the Gracchi atone for the

laws which they imposed on their country? Did the fame that Cicero won by eloquence compensate him for the tragic end to which his orations against Marcus Antonius brought him? Believe me, my excellent friends, had it been your lot to live under the old republic, you would have been as famous, and perhaps as much harassed by anxiety and envy, as the orators you so much admire; and had it been their lot to live in these piping times of peace, the heroes of the bar would have acquiesced in the tranquility we enjoy. It may not be easy—it may be impossible—for us to attain a great and splendid reputation as orators; but we can at least be content with the calmer tenor of the present age, and applaud, without envying, our ancestors.

It would be idle to speculate whether Tacitus imaged himself in the characters of Julius Secundus, of Vipstanus Messala, or of Curiatius Maternus. The speeches he ascribes to them respectively display oratorical qualities of a very high order, especially when we remember that the 'Dialogue' is one of his earliest works.

CHAPTER X.

THE HISTORIAN.

THERE was a time when the works of Tacitus were far more familiar to English readers than they are now, —when sages like Bacon, and historians like Clarendon, drew from them moral and political adages, and appealed to them as manuals for statesmen. But in proportion as the power of the Crown in this country has diminished, and that of Parliament increased, the chronicler of ten Cæsars has ceased to be an oracle for

our public men. He shares the fate of Cicero—he lives almost in name alone.

Quite otherwise is it with his reputation in Europe, and especially in France. There Tacitus is still reverenced, and often consulted as a guide for statists, historians, and orators. If we except the work of Dean Merivale, the merits of which are so obvious that it would be almost impertinent to praise it in this little volume, it would be difficult to name any treatise on the 'History' or 'Annals' that has been written by an Englishman worth reading: while, on the other hand, it would be tedious to enumerate the French or German writers who, in the present century alone, have either built on the foundations of Tacitus, or thrown new light on his works.

The different tone of the 'History' and 'Annals' has already been hinted at; probably had the reign of Domitian come down to us, it would be found that the later books of the 'History' were a preparation, at least in the spirit pervading them, for the records of the Julian and Claudian Cæsars. That the 'Annals' place the emperors in a most unfavorable light has often been noted. Voltaire, who was by no means a partisan of kings in general, and Napoleon the First, who may have had a fellow-feeling with military despots, have both pointed out the bias of Tacitus, and maintained that in the 'Annals' at least we have a political satire, rather than a fair or trustworthy narrative.

Could we read some of the authors whom Tacitus had before him while engaged on his latest work,—still more, could we peep into some of the family journals of the time—for the upper classes in Rome at all times kept journals of public events or private feuds,—we might very probably obtain a clue to the

spirit which guided him in the selection and structure of the 'Annals.' Vanity, or the desire for sympathy from an audience, led the keepers of such journals or memoirs to read them occasionally to a few particular friends, and these friends appear to have been not always discreet, and even occasionally faithless, and so the contents of these private papers got wind, and reached the ears of some vigilant informer, and the journalist had every reason to repent of having been so communicative. "I remember," writes Seneca the rhetorician, "hearing Labienus recite portions of a manuscript which he entitled 'History:' now and then he would pass over many pages of the scroll in his hand, saying, this must not be read until after my decease." Apparently there was some very treasonable matter in Labienus's 'History,' since he avoided the trouble of being put to death by burying himself alive in the tomb of his ancestors; and his book, after his death, was ordered by the senate to be publicly burnt.

Nor did Tacitus confine his attention to private memoirs. He plumes himself on not excluding tales, resting on common rumor only, from his 'Annals.' Drusus Cæsar, the son of Tiberius, was poisoned by Sejanus, and his partner in guilt, Livia. But there was another version of the story, which Tacitus disbelieved, yet which he cannot refrain from repeating. The story was this: that Sejanus contrived to poison the cup which Drusus was about to present to his father, and warned Tiberius not to drink out of it. Drusus having no suspicion of the fraud, drained the poisoned chalice, and Tiberius was persuaded that his son committed suicide through dread of being discovered. Tacitus says—"In my account of the death of Drusus, the best and most authentic of historians have been

my guides. A report, however, which found credit at the time, and has not yet died out, ought not to be omitted." He admits that "the report cannot stand the test of examination." He gives excellent reasons for disbelieving it. He says in another portion of the 'Annals,' that Rome was the most credulous and scandalous of cities; and yet he cannot refrain, skeptical as he was, from telling and commenting upon this monstrous story. The true reason peeps out at the last. The story furnished him with an arrow against the Cæsar. "The truth is," he writes, "Sejanus was capable of every species of villainy, however atrocious: the emperor's partiality for him increased the number of his enemies; and, both the sovereign and the favorite being objects of public detestation, malignity itself could coin no tale so black, and even improbable, that men were not willing to believe."

The drift of the 'Annals' can hardly be mistaken: it is an elaborate protest against Cæsarianism: it is also, that Pliny's 'Panegyric' was directly, an indirect encomium on Trajan. Nothing is more agreeable to the ears of a new dynasty than a picture of a former one drawn with the darkest colors. A golden age has come: an iron age has passed away.

"Tacitus," observes Dean Merivale, "constructs the history of the empire with reference to a dominant idea in his own mind." It was such an "idea" that, in his writings on the French Revolution, misled and indeed perverted the genius of Burke, and rendered the veteran champion of English liberty the advocate of a corrupt monarchy and a still more corrupt Church. It was a fixed belief with Tacitus that Rome owed all her greatness to a senatorial government, or rather to an oligarchy. In feeling and in theory he was a

patrician of the patricians; and consequently he attributed to Cæsarian usurption the decline and decay of Rome. The battle of Actium was for him the Hegira from which dated the beginning of evil days. Rome, governed by consuls and tribunes chosen by a free people was virtuous and valiant; governed by despots, she was profligate and faint-hearted. The once noble and patriotic senators were succeeded by a sordid and servile race, who, shrinking like dogs under the huntsman's whip, crouched under their lords in peace, and did not resent humiliation in war. Julius Cæsar had admitted to the benches of the senate, Gauls, Spaniards and Africans; upstart foreigners and enfranchised bondmen, it was said, sat beside men whose forefathers had expelled the Tarquins, and humbled the pride of the Marsian and the Samnite; two-thirds of the conscript fathers might have been puzzled if asked to produce their pedigree. It was the policy of the last and noblest of dictators to extend the privileges of Roman citizens to the provincials, and to recruit the senate with the best subjects of the empire. But this wise as well as generous scheme was an abomination to the historian.

A very slight acquaintance with the annals of Rome in the last century of the commonwealth is sufficient to dispel the illusion that, as a city, having merely municipal laws and functions, she was great; but as the head of an empire reaching from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from the Grampian mountains to the first cataract of the Nile, mean and inglorious. As for the city, in the good days envied and extolled by the historian, we have Cicero's authority for describing it as a theatre in which "domestic fury and fierce civil strife" were almost annually the performances; and as

for the provinces, until they found Cæsars for their protectors, they were the unvarying scene of the most cruel and covetous tyranny that, if we except Asiatic despotisms, ever afflicted the human race. Even the poet Lucan, whose 'Pharsalia' is really an indictment of Cæsar and the Marian party, does not disguise the licentiousness of the era which he and Tacitus profess to lament.

Even from translations English readers may derive very fair conceptions of the Satires of Juvenal and the writings of Tacitus, at all events, so far as to perceive that the poet confirms many opinions on men and manners held by the historian. Living in the same age, though probably moving in different circles of society, they both bear witness to the general profligacy of life in Rome. But there is a difference in their portraits of it. Tacitus, not concealing the depravity of the upper classes, ascribes it to the evil example set by the emperors. Juvenal, in this respect more impartial, shows us that there was, in many a noble house, a Nero or a Domitian. Keeping ever in view his repugnance to the system of government framed by Augustus, the historian concentrates in the Cæsars themselves the vices that were common to the age. But long before there was an emperor there were imperial vices in Rome. But the profligacy, political or personal, of consuls and senators, had not a Tacitus to brand it, and we are left to infer from other writers the enormities of the commonwealth in its later years. The speeches and letters of Cicero alone supply sufficient evidence that the crimes of the emperors had been at least rehearsed by the nobles of his time; that the vices of the palace had been practised in the halls of conscript fathers. The exaggerations of an orator, however, are allowed for by hearers or readers of his

speeches, and how often Cicero fluctuated, as his interest at the moment required, in his judgment of public men, is palpable in his letters. He merely used the common privilege of barristers and political writers in every age, to exhibit his friends in the fairest and his foes in the foulest light. Tacitus is a prosecutor of the Cæsars—those at least who are described in the 'Annals'—quite as much as Marcus Tullius was of Catiline or Antonius. But his accusations and insinuations are rarely called in question; and carried away by the force and beauty of his language, by the skillful arrangement of his facts, and his enthusiasm for republican virtues, the reader of his works, passive in his hands, often yields implicit evidence to his record of imperial enormities.

Tacitus admits that the affairs of Tiberius, Caius (Caligula), Claudius, and Nero were misrepresented while they survived by *fear*, and after their deaths, by *hatred;* and, as regards Nero, this admission is repeated by Josephus. There is, indeed reason for believing that the odium in which Tiberius was held, increased as time went on. In spite, however, of this statement, the historian throughout the 'Annals' appears to lean to the detractor's side, and represents the Claudian and Julian Cæsars in the spirit of his own generation; the third, that is, after their respective reigns. In the time both of the Flavian emperors and of Nerva and Trajan, there was a strong reaction against the despotism of the earlier dynasty;—a recoil from the extravagance of the Caian, Claudian, and Neronian period. From the bondage in which the senate was held by the emperors, from the influence of women and freedmen, and the liberty, or more truly the license, granted to public informers, a writer con-

temporary with Trajan, and one who had escaped from the caprices of Domitian, naturally looked back on a period of general misrule with aversion on a par with that which the Long Parliament felt for the administration of Charles, Strafford, Buckingham, and Laud, or with that which the statesmen of 1789 felt for the Bastille, the taxes and services of the ancient *régime*, and its feudal and royal abuses. Towards the earlier emperors, perhaps not excluding Augustus, the feelings of Tacitus may be aptly conveyed in the words which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Cassius, when denouncing the usurpation of the First Cæsar:—

> "Age, thou art shamed:
> Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
> When went there by an age, since the great flood,
> But it was fam'd with more than one man?
> When could they say, till now, that talked of Rome,
> That her wide walks encompassed but one man?
> Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
> When there is in it but one only man.
> O! you and I have heard our fathers say,
> There was a Brutus once, that would have brook'd
> The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome,
> As easily as a king."

In the pages of Tacitus there is often a spirit visible akin to that of Dante. The Roman indeed had not the advantage of the Florentine in a sure and certain faith that there was a region of bale reserved for his political enemies, and accordingly could not exhibit Tiberius in a red-hot tomb like Farinata's, nor imprison Nero in a pool of ice, like the Archbishop Ruggieri. But he did all that lay in his power to make both of these emperors infamous forever, and in the following words of the 'Annals,' points at the secret tortures that await the wicked even on earth. Tiberius had addressed a letter to the senate,

in which were the following words (the English reader may be reminded that we have not the letter itself, and so cannot divine the context of these words, which may merely have related to physical sufferings): "What to write, conscript fathers—in what terms to express myself, or what to refrain from writing—is a matter of such perplexity, that if I knew how to decide, may the just gods, and the goddesses of vengeance, doom me to die in pangs, worse than those under which I linger every day." "We have here," proceeds the historian, 'the features of the inward man. His crimes retaliated upon him with the keenest retribution; so true is the saying of the great philosopher [Socrates], the oracle of ancient wisdom, that if the minds of tyrants were laid open to our view, we should see them gashed and mangled with the whips and stings of horror and remorse. By blows and stripes the flesh is made to quiver, and, in like manner, cruelty and inordinate passions, malice and evil deeds, become internal executioners, and with unceasing torture goad and lacerate the heart. Of this truth Tiberius is a melancholy instance. Neither the imperial dignity, nor the gloom of solitude, nor the rocks of Capreæ, could shield him from himself. He lived on the rack of guilt, and his wounded spirit groaned in agony." Such a passage as this would have harmonized with the gloom of the 'Inferno.' In the opening stanzas of the 'Purgatorio,' Dante records his sense of relief from the regions of sorrow, and return to the light of day:—

> "O'er better waves to speed her rapid course
> The light bark of my genius lifts the sail,
> Well pleased to leave so cruel sea behind,
> And of that second region will I sing."
>
> [Cary's Translation.]

And in the 'Agricola,' we find a corresponding welcome to the advent of Nerva and Trajan: "At length we begin to revive from our lethargy: the Emperor Nerva, in the beginning of this glorious era, has found means to reconcile two things, till now deemed incompatible,—civil liberty and the prerogative of the prince: and his successor Trajan continues to heal our wounds, and, by a just and wise administration, to diffuse the blessings of peace and good order through every part of the empire. Hopes are conceived of the constitution by all orders of men, and not conceived only, but rising every hour into confidence and public security."

Perhaps the affinity of his works to modern rather than ancient history may account for their mutilation. Their author strode before his time, and accordingly the men of the time could not relish his productions. Centuries passed by before Tacitus attracted the notice and attained the rank due to him among the great writers of antiquity. Pliny the younger, indeed, and a narrow circle of personal friends, awaited with deep interest, and doubtless, when they were published, crowned with zealous applause, each of his great works. But beyond that circle Tacitus apparently was little known. At the time he was writing nearly all narrative was assuming a biographical form; and hence Suetonius and his followers, the wretched chroniclers of the Cæsars from the death of Trajan to Constantine — the so-called "Augustan historians"— were read eagerly, while Tacitus slumbered on the shelf. His namesake, if not his remote relative, the emperor, directed that copies of all his writings should be made and deposited in every great library of the empire. But the reign of Tacitus, the Cæsar, was too brief for his instructions to be carried out; and indeed

the times were too perturbed for literature of the highest order to be much in request. The gravity of the historian's temper, his concise style, his profound thought, were not favorable to the preservation of his manuscripts in ages when shallow and superficial authors were in vogue; and it is among the ironies of fate that we have nearly complete the works of such epitomists as Florus, Eutropius, and Aurelius Victor, while at least thirty books of the most consummate of Roman chroniclers have fallen a prey to oblivion. A tardy compensation was indeed awarded to Tacitus, but far too late to atone for the injury he received from the negligence or caprice of his own countrymen. Gradually such portions of his writings as we have now were rescued piecemeal from the worms or the damp of their hiding-places; but not until the beginning of the sixteenth century of our era were the first five books of the 'Annals' found in the Abbey of Cernay, in Westphalia, and published for the first time at Rome, in 1515. From that date, with a few dissenting voices, the historian has been the object of honor and applause. Bayle pronounced the 'Annals' and 'History' one of the grandest efforts of human intellect. That consummate scholar, Justus Lipsius, was so deeply versed in the books of Tacitus, that he offered to recite any passage with a dagger at his breast to be used against himself on a failure of memory. Politicians and philosophers, from the sixteenth century downwards, have regarded him as an oracle, in practical and speculative wisdom alike. That keen commentator on the foibles and vices of mankind, the essayist Montaigne, speaks of him with unusual enthusiasm; the greatest of Italian historians, Machiavelli, took Tacitus for his model; and the recreation of the great French mathematician

D'Alembert, was to read the 'Annals' or the 'History' in those moments when he "let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause."

It is well observed by Heeren that, "of all political characters, Demosthenes is the most sublime and purely tragic with which history is acquainted. When still stirred by the vehement force of his language—when reading his life in Plutarch—when transferring ourselves into his times and situation—we are carried away by a deeper interest than is excited by any hero in epic or tragic poem. What a crowd of emotions must have struggled through his breast amid the interchange of hope and despair for Athenian freedom! How natural was it that the lines of melancholy and of indignation, such as we yet behold in his bust, should have been imprinted on his severe countenance!"

We have no authentic bust of Tacitus. Yet it is not difficult to imagine him to have been, like the great Athenian orator, a man on whose features alternate hope and despair had traced deep lines. Knowing so little of his life, we cannot pronounce him austere. Yet it is evident from the 'Agricola' alone that he was not sanguine in expectation, while there can be no doubt, from the general tenor of his works, that he was sarcastic—a man of whom it might fairly be said,—

> "He reads much:
> He is a great observer, and he looks
> Quite through the deeds of men:
> Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort
> As if he mocked himself, and scorned his spirit
> That could be moved to smile at anything."
>
> —Julius Cæsar, act i.

END OF TACITUS.

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